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A Report on the Three Yagami Sisters

My incredibly stupid older brother has been fooling around and getting all cozy with three pretty sisters lately. This is scientifically impossible, and so after investigating this strange phenomenon in detail, I completed this report in order to expose this fraud to the public eye.

The Eldest Sister, Tsurugi

The eldest of the Yagami sisters, Yagami Tsurugi. A teacher in a child's body. She might look like a kid, but her age is that of an adult, making her an "All characters who appear in this title are over 18" type of character.¹

Her age is 31. But she really looks much younger. Like my brother, she is a teacher at Konohana Sakuya Academy, and I also think she's technically my homeroom teacher (it's not like I go to school, so I don't really know.)

Below you can find a comment from this piece of lolicon eye candy:

"Ya know, I don't think things are so bad right now. This profoundly mysterious state of Gods mingling with humans is how this world should have been in the first place."

"Although, I guess I can't overlook it when the balance of the world gets really thrown out of whack to the point of the world getting destroyed, or when my cute little sisters get put in danger."

"But really, Sasami, you should come to school every once in a while. If people find out that I have a student who doesn't come to school, that principal is gonna get mad at me."

Well, sorry.

¹ A reference to many eroge, which put this disclaimer at the beginning.

The Next Eldest Sister, Kagami

The next eldest Yagami sister, Yagami Kagami. She always seems sleepy. Compared with her oddball siblings, she seems incredibly plain. She stands out so little that you might almost forget she exists sometimes.

She's sixteen years old. She's a student at Konohana Sakuya Academy, and I think she's supposed to be in the same class as I am (but I don't go to school, so I'll keep this short). She sleeps so much that I almost wonder if she's sick or something, and it's completely unclear whether she actually listens in class or not.

Below you can find a comment from this girl who seems like she was thrown away:

"Funyaa. At the very least, I don't think you have to be on your guard around me. I'm your ally, which makes me an ally for all humankind. After all, I'm a being who is endowed with more value in the human world, controlled by its material values, than in the extraordinary world woven by the Gods."

"Also, Sasami-san, why don't you consider coming to school once in a while? You haven't been coming, and I don't think I even remember what you look like anymore..."

Well, not remembering that isn't going to kill you.



The Youngest Sister, Tama

The youngest Yagami sister, Yagami Tama. A huge-breasted elementary schooler. She's the polar opposite of her sister Tsurugi, in that she looks like an adult but she's really an elementary schooler. She's the kind of person that people would look at and go "Eh? Is that a cosplay? Is this an adult video shoot going on?"

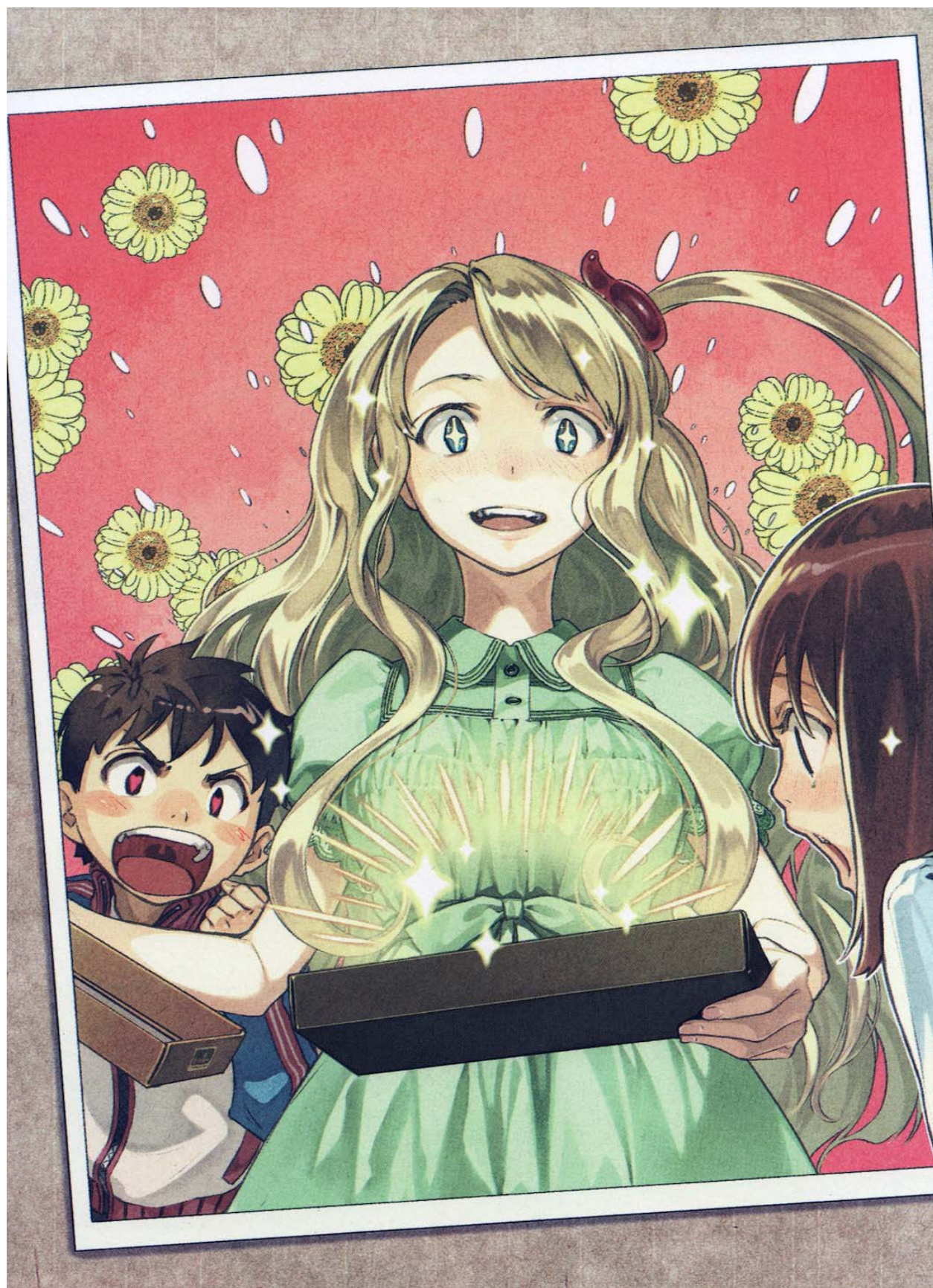
Quite unbelievably, she's only nine years old and is in her third year of elementary school. She had a nice body, to the point where just walking outside with her leather backpack was enough for police to go up and question her, but her mental state was completely that of a child.

Below you can find a comment from this girl whose growth spurt had come way too early:

"Umm, umm, Tama is still incomplete and imbalanced! But still, Tama was told that her influence on the world is reaaaally strong, and she can't just go and do what she wants! But but, sometimes Tama doesn't understand the human world, so she can't tell what's 'normal' and what's 'weird,' so she ends up changing things by mistake!"

"But also, if Sasami-oneechan doesn't come more to school, she can't grow into a respectable adult!"

Oh shut up.

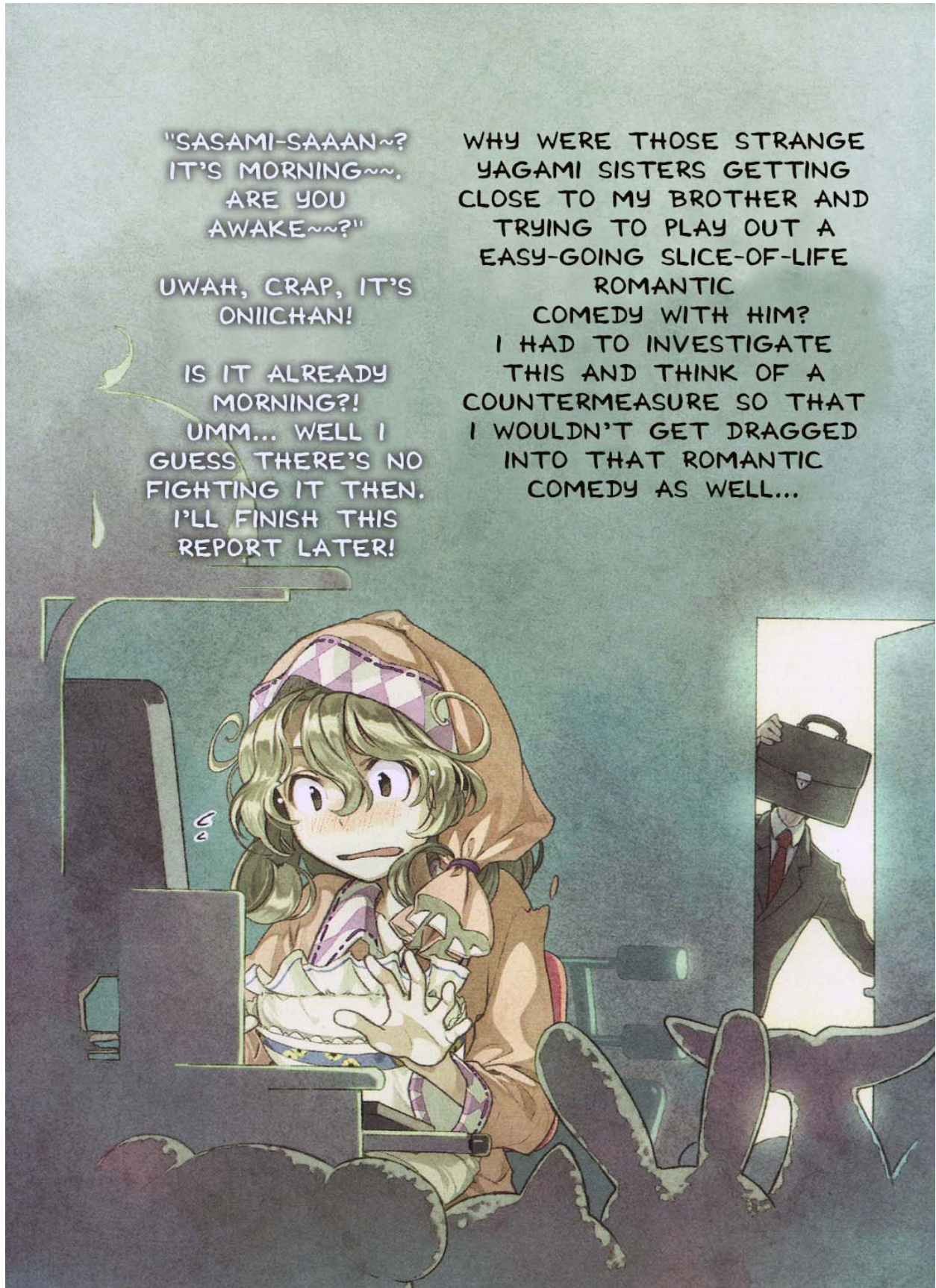


"SASAMI-SAAAN~?
IT'S MORNING~~.
ARE YOU
AWAKE~~?"

UWAH, CRAP, IT'S
ONIICHAN!

IS IT ALREADY
MORNING?!
UMM... WELL I
GUESS THERE'S NO
FIGHTING IT THEN.
I'LL FINISH THIS
REPORT LATER!

WHY WERE THOSE STRANGE
YAGAMI SISTERS GETTING
CLOSE TO MY BROTHER AND
TRYING TO PLAY OUT A
EASY-GOING SLICE-OF-LIFE
ROMANTIC
COMEDY WITH HIM?
I HAD TO INVESTIGATE
THIS AND THINK OF A
COUNTERMEASURE SO THAT
I WOULDN'T GET DRAGGED
INTO THAT ROMANTIC
COMEDY AS WELL...



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Part 1: AMATERASU

Chapter 1: I'll Start Trying Tomorrow

“Sasami-saaaaan~~”

My brother was calling me.¹

I flipped my laptop screen closed, and took a nice, long stretch.

The date was February 14th.

St. Valentine's Day.

“Sasami-saaaaan~~ It's morning~~”

My brother casually came into the room.

He was wearing the suit he usually wore to work (he was a school teacher at a local school) and he used his briefcase to hide his face.

¹ Just a note about the convention I will use: I am going to use “brother” in narration and “oniichan” in dialogue or dialogue-like narration. I would use oniichan everywhere, but it sounds pretty awkward when used in normal narration to me.

My brother never liked having his face seen.

I really wished he would just go to work without bothering me first though.

I was feeling pretty sluggish while I thought about that, so my body fell sideways.

“Sasami-saaaaan~~”

My brother approached me with suspicious motions, and began to give me his usual speech.

“It’s morning. Early Monday morning. Please try to go to school today.”

“Can’t.”

That was the first thing I said to my brother that morning.

But my brother didn’t seem to mind, and just kept his gaze on me as I lay there.

“Sasami-san. You’re already sixteen. You’re finally a high school student, so how about trying to enjoy high school life for at least a day?”

My brother let out a sigh, and set down the tray he was holding in one hand next to me.

“You must be hungry. I made some breakfast for you.”

“Mm.”

I lifted my head up and looked at what was in my brother’s hands.

On the tray rested sandwiches that had been cut into rectangles.

The sandwiches were made with bananas, kiwis, strawberries and other fruits, with fresh cream holding everything together. It was quite a colorful sandwich.

“Oniichan.”

Certainly, I did feel a bit hungry, but I kept lying there.

I just made a few chomping motions with my mouth.

“Feed me.”

“You’re such a baby, Sasami-san. You’re already sixteen.”

“If you don’t feed me, I’m gonna starve to death.”

“Well, I guess I have to then.”

After he had fed me around three of the sandwiches, I felt satisfied.

“Oniichan can have the rest if he wants.”

There was still quite a bit left.

But my brother shook his head.

“I already finished eating. I’ll just leave this here then...”

My brother wrapped the sandwiches up, plate and all.

“If you’re hungry when it’s lunchtime, please help yourself.”

Well, I’m pretty sure I’d be sleeping at noon anyways.

“Would you like something to drink? You ate that in a weird position, so are you sure nothing stuck in your throat?”

“I’m fine. More importantly, you’re going to be late, oniichan.”

Teachers had to wake up early in the morning. They really didn't have the time to deal with their hikikomori little sisters.²

I was satisfied now that my stomach was full, and I felt myself getting sleepy.

"Leave me alone. I'm going to sleep."

"Okay, okay."

My brother stroked the top of my head, his hand running through my hair.

"Well, I'm off to school then. If Sasami-san feels like it, you should come to school even in the middle of the day. I'd welcome you with open arms any time."

My brother headed out of my room, although he seemed sad that we were parting.

He headed out of my large yet cramped, peaceful room.

Into that outside world which overflowed with other people and absurd happenings.

² A hikikomori is a social recluse, someone who refuses to go outside and socialize. There's actually a lot more to that word, but in the interest of keeping things simple I'll just say that much.

“I’m leaving, Sasami-san.”

“Oniichan.”

As I fought my drowsiness, I suddenly remembered something and reached out a hand.

Ah right. I completely forgot. I had gone through the trouble of ordering it too.

Today was February 14th, after all.

I fiddled around with the mail order box, and after tearing open the vinyl wrapping, I took the contents from the box.

It was a small rectangular box, wrapped with fairly plain wrapping paper.

“Here. A bentou for you.”³

It would be annoying to throw the bentou to him, so I just held it up instead.

“Hm? What is it?”

³ A lunch box.

My brother came back to my side, took the box, and stared at it intently.

“I already told you, it’s a bentou for you.”

I rubbed my eyes. Ugh, I seriously was sleepy.

“Have a nice day, oniichan.”

Today, I wouldn’t try hard either.



Chapter 2: The Third Sister, Tama

After he was done talking with me, my brother casually left the house.

Or rather, he stopped right in front of the front gate of our house (A two floor house. The second floor's walls had all been knocked down, and the entire floor had been converted into my room. The first floor was my brother's living space, the bathroom, and etc. etc.).

Tsukuyomi Kamiomi & Sasami

That was written on the nameplate. My brother stared at that nameplate, spellbound.

“Fufu... fufufu... it’s like we’re husband and wife... fufufu...”

He muttered a few gross things like that to himself, and then cheerfully began pedaling his bike.

@@@@@

As my brother proceeded unsteadily towards work, he suddenly stopped and cocked his head to the side.

The town we lived in, Amenonuboko¹, was a completely normal residential town. If you headed towards the station, you could find some more hustle and bustle, but it was mostly a lazy town filled with normal houses.

“There’s something... strange...”

My brother skillfully rode his bike while covering his face with one hand, and then...

¹ A reference to a famous spear in Japanese mythology that was used to raise land from the sea.

“A demon... or something like that...”

As my brother babbled nonsensical things, he arrived at a certain place.

In that place was a river, which lay at the base of a number of mountains that dotted our town.

The road there wasn't paved, the water was pristine, and small splashes of water bounced off of the rocks that were scattered about.

My brother dismounted his bicycle and approached the river on foot.

“.....?”

He cocked his head to the side and looked all around him, when...

“Ribbit ribbiiiiit~~!”

Suddenly...

Right in front of my brother, a bulge formed around the middle of the river, and something burst out from the water and leapt towards him!

“.....?!”

My brother threw his head back in surprise, and the mysterious object landed a few meters from him.

The object opened its mouth, and shouted in an innocent-sounding voice.

“Tama-chan is~~!”

She didn’t seem to mind the river’s current or the coldness of the winter, and just stood there with a full smile.

“A cute, healthy frog! Ribbit ribiiiiit~~!”

She let out some rather bizarre words.

It was a person.

Not only that, it was a girl beautiful enough that should she walk through the town, anybody would turn their heads to get a second look.

However, considering she appeared right out of the middle of the river, you also got the feeling that she was someone you didn’t want to associate with.

Oniichan, run away!

“Hm?”

But my brother just stood there with a puzzled expression on his face at this girl who appeared as if she was the goddess of the river.

“Tama-san, isn’t it? What are you doing there?”

Oh?

Was this someone he knew?

Feeling a bit suspicious, I squinted my eyes and took a good look (In the end, from this perspective, trying to see things with my own eyes weren’t enough for me to understand the situation...)

When I took a nice, long look, I realized that the pretty girl who appeared from the lake was definitely...

Was definitely none other than the youngest of the three Yagami Sisters, Yagami Tama.

“... Whaa?”

Tama said something strange and her eyes widened.

“Ah! Paparin!”

For some reason, Tama had branded my brother with the name “Paparin.”

“Good morning~~~”

“Tama-san, what are you doing over there? You’ll catch a cold, you know.”

“Well, umm, you see...”

Tama climbed onto the riverside and shook her entire body, spraying water everywhere.

It was almost like she wasn’t wearing anything underneath her clothes. The moisture clung to her body and all her body’s lines were visible, making her seem bizarrely seductive.

However, she still behaved completely innocently, moving about and conducting herself almost like an infant.

“Ribbiit Ribbiiit~! Tama is a frog!”

“.....?”

My brother cocked his head to the side at this girl who defied logic.

Tama seemed to be unsatisfied at his reaction, and her lips thinned into a frown.

“Umm... you know, Tama you know, she always plays around here! With the frogs! But, you know, all the frogs went away! So Tama is now the frog instead!”

She looked like she could be a company executive’s private secretary, but she behaved completely like a child.

And it made sense.

After all, Tama was nine, and was in her third year of elementary school.

As proof of that, she happily swung her red leather bookbag onto her back.²

“Haha, I see.”

² Standard for elementary school girls in Japan.

My brother acted like he actually understood the nonsense that was coming from Tama's mouth.

"You're a kind girl, aren't you, Tama?"

"Waaah, a compliment~~!"

"But, Tama-san. The frogs didn't go away. They're probably just hibernating."

"Hai-ber-nating?"

"Yes. There's no food in the winter, so the frogs go to sleep so they don't waste energy. They aren't dead."

"Ahh, so like Mamarin!"

".....?"

My brother seemed at a loss at her cryptic words.

"So, there's no need for you to become a frog. Actually, if you make too much noise, the frogs won't be able to sleep. I mean, if someone was being noisy near Tama-san when she was asleep, what would she do?"

“She would kill them!”

“I know, right?”

Wait, no, killing them wouldn’t be good at all.

“So, Tama-san, let’s be quiet and let the frogs sleep peacefully. Don’t worry. Once spring comes, they’ll show up again. You can go and play with them then... Understood?”

“.....”

Tama furrowed her brow and sunk into thought for a bit.

Finally, she flashed her teeth and gave my brother a broad smile.

“Got it! Tama won’t bother the frogs when they sleep!”

“Tama-san is a good girl!”

My brother patted Tama on the head.

“So Tama-san, please go to school. Your school is in the opposite direction, isn’t it? It surely won’t be good if you’re late.”

“Ah, you’re right!”

She seriously forgot about school up until now? What a kid.

At the same time, her belly emitted a cute-sounding growl.

“Wah!”

Tama didn’t seem embarrassed at all.

“Paparin, Tama is hungwy! Actually, Tama really wanted to get here to be a frog, so Tama forgot to eat breakfast!”

“My my.”

My brother seemed to sympathize, and then... as if it was the most natural thing in the world...

He held out the box I had given him this morning.

“Well, I’ll give you this then. It’s my lunch, but I can just buy lunch at school, so I’ll be fine. Just walk to school and you can eat this on the way.”

“Eh? You’re giving this to Tama? Really?”

Tama seemed just a bit hesitant, but her stomach seemed to win out and she took the box.

She gingerly held the box to her and gave a shy laugh.

“Thank you, Paparin... Tama loves you.”

Tama hugged my brother tight and then began to energetically ran off, her backpack swinging behind her.

“See you, Paparin! Tama is going to school! Paparin should do his best at work too!”

“Tama left the house today without eating breakfast, so Tsurugi-nee and Kagami-nee might be angry. So please say sorry to them for Tama! Ehehe... See you, Paparin!”

After she announced that with a pure and naïve smile, Tama darted off.

Chapter 3: The Eldest Sister, Tsurugi

Damn oniichan...

Suddenly feeling empty and not being able to bear it anymore, I took off the “Oniichan Surveillance Tool” I was wearing on my head.

My hair was standing on end from the static electricity, and I fixed it with a comb. I let out a groan.

It was Valentine’s Day too...

I had to work up a lot of courage to do that too...

And he gave it to Tama.

“Oniichan should just go and die...”

Feeling the unpleasant sensation of tears beginning to blur my vision, I stood up and began to walk unsteadily.

I really, really wanted to find my brother and hurl all my complaints at him.

“Alright...”

I decided on the noble plan of going to where my brother was and punching him. I took out my school uniform from my closet.

I sloppily took off my pajamas, and started to put on my uniform, a bit uneasy at how unfamiliar the outfit felt.

Ah, I’ll probably be alright...

It felt like today I could at least make it to school, fueled by all this anger.

“I’m going to punch oniichan’s lights out...”

Nodding eagerly, I opened the door.

Ohh, this is pretty easy.

I walked down the hallway.

This was no sweat.

I began to go down the stairs.

The soles of my foot felt pretty sticky.

Was I stepping in gum? Oh my, my head was feeling a bit light...

It was probably my imagination.

I'll be fine today. I'll be fine...

"Ugh....."

I wobbled and sunk to the floor, in the midst of a world flickering bright red around me.

"Ghwaaaaaaaaaaaaaahh."

I vomited.

@@@@@

"....."

Ah, I was sleeping.

I woke up in my own room and gave a nice, long stretch.

I sure slept for a while...

From what I could remember, I tried to go to school, found out I couldn't, vomited... then I went back to my room, collapsed onto my bed in my uniform, and went to sleep.

"I really thought I would be okay too..."

Oniichan, I guess I really am hopeless.

It was scary.

The outside world was scary.

It gave me the creeps.

It nauseated me.

How could everyone just so cheerfully go on living in a world as uncertain and vague as that?

“-Nn...”

I opened the small refrigerator I had in my room, took out some mineral water, and rinsed my mouth with it.

Feeling a bit calmer, I returned to my little garden surrounded by computers, where I found the leftover sandwiches that my brother had left behind.

While I ate the sandwiches, I lifted the “Oniichan Surveillance Tool” up and put it on my head. Alright, I had stopped watching for a while. I hope he didn’t get caught up in something stupid while I was away...

@@@@@

Hiyoko: If it’s oniichan... I’m fine with it ♥

I nodded at Hiyoko as she blushed, and I stripped her of her maid outfit.

Me: Hiyoko, Hiyoko!!

Hiyoko: Ahh, oniichaaaaaann~~!! I loooove you~~ ♥♥♥!!

-

What the hell was this?!?!?!?

Of course I had no choice but to spew both the sandwich and mineral water out of my mouth.

@@@@@

Konohana Sakuya Academy was an incredibly average high school situated in the middle of Amenonuboko. Just as the name might suggest, the school was famous for the row of splendid sakura trees that graced the school grounds by the roadside (it was still February though, so the sakura had not blossomed yet).¹

My brother was a teacher at that school, and one of his coworkers was the eldest Yagami ister, Yagami Tsurugi.

From her appearance, you would think she was a child.

The youngest sister Tama also had a height and sex appeal that didn't match her age, but the eldest sister Tsurugi went the opposite way.

¹ The "ko" in "konohana" is written with the same kanji for sakura.

She was thirty-one (that's what she claimed at least).

But despite that, she looked like she was in the lower grades of elementary school.

Her desk was right in the corner of the staff room, right next to the neat and orderly desk of my brother.

"Tsurugi-sensei."

My brother's unsteady voice echoed through the Konohana Sakuya Academy staff room.

"Please refrain from playing eroge so confidently in the school staff room."²

Tsurugi was wearing plain clothes, sitting lazily in her chair Indian style, and clicking on her mouse.

There were headphones attached to her ears, and she was sexually assaulting the little sister that was showing on the screen.

"Tsurugi-sensei~~"

² "Eroge," which is short for "erotic game," is a genre of Japanese visual novel that contains 18+ material.

My brother didn't seem discouraged at being ignored. He seemed to come to the conclusion that she couldn't hear him because she had headphones on, and began to write with a permanent marker in a college-ruled notebook.

Tsurugi-sensei, I don't think eroge is appropriate for the staff room.

Tsurugi took a quick glance at the writing, snatched the notebook from my brother, and then wrote out her response with a red pen.

Shut up. Go die. (^o^)

Her words seemed harsh, but my brother's opinion still seemed to have gotten through to her. Tsurugi sighed and clicked the save button on the computer screen that was overflowing with pink mosaics.

When she shut down the eroge, she took off her headphones and let out a yawn.

"Is it noon already?"

Her voice even sounded childish.

"I'm pretty hungry. Hey, Tsukuyomi, go buy some bread and come back. Make it melon bread for me!"

In case you were wondering, every day my brother got sent to buy lunch by this tiny girl.

“Ah, I see~”

But for some reason, my brother seemed almost happy about getting ordered around by this kid, and was almost trembling in his excitement.

“Actually, I don’t have anything prepared for lunch today either. My little sister gave me some lunch, but I ended up giving that to Tama-chan because she was hungry.”

“You met Tama?”

Tsurugi’s eyes widened.

“You know, she didn’t even eat breakfast and ran out of the house, screaming something like ‘Tama is going to become a frog! Ribbit ribiiiiit! Amphibians! On land or on sea! Zugokku! Zugokku!’³ She’s always been a bit of an idiot, but today I really had to doubt her sanity.”

“Ah, well, Tama-san was just...”

³ Most likely a reference to the Z’GOK, an amphibious Gundam unit.

My brother explained the situation to Tsurugi.

“..... Hmph.”

Tsurugi rubbed her eyes, not seeming too interested, and then yawned again.

“Tama is still a brat, so she’s pretty self-centered. She has too much empathy. She tends to identify with others a bit too much. So when the frogs she always played with went into hibernation, she felt as lonely as if her own body had disappeared, and she was trying to bury that feeling of loss...”

She muttered something I didn’t really understand.

“It was good you were there to stop her, Tsukuyomi. If you were just a bit slower, there might have been an ‘alteration.’ Geez... Kagami is bad enough, but Tama is even more dangerous. Their big sister just can’t stop worrying about them... I’m getting really stressed out... go die, Tsukuyomi.”

Tsurugi began prodding my brother with her slippers, almost as if she was throwing a tantrum.

Although, my brother seemed pretty happy about it.

“Well, I really don’t think you have to worry. Tama-san is growing into a fine, healthy woman if you ask me.”

“Although, the only parts of her that are growing are the parts that really shouldn’t have to grow. Like her breasts. Mine don’t grow at all... I wonder if she’s been sucking energy from me in some way I can’t see...”

After she muttered that with a hint of frustration, Tsurugi hopped down from the seat and headed for the staff room exit.

“Hey, Tsukuyomi, you said you didn’t have lunch, right?”

She lightly thought for a bit.

And for some reason, she blushed.

“I-I’ll go buy some for you.”

“Hm? Tsurugi-sensei is? Tsurugi-sensei, who usually makes me go buy lunch, and doesn’t even thank me or pay me for the things I buy back?”

My brother seemed shaken at this impossible sequence of events, but Tsurugi just left him there and walked heavily away.

@@@@@

After a few minutes, Tsurugi returned.

“I’m back. Here.”

She had brought back wrapped chocolate cornets, like the kind you would buy in convenience stores.

She seemed to have bought melon bread for herself. She sat back on her seat in the same cross-legged position, and began to bite into and chew her meal like a small animal.

“T-Thank you very much, Tsurugi-sensei...”

My brother seemed moved.

Perhaps he wanted to express his joy, for he began to spin around and dance right there.

“Waiii, Tsurugi-sensei bought me a chocolate cornet! I am so overjoyed!”

A murderous atmosphere began to swirl in the staff room.

The other teachers glared at my brother with feral eyes.

“T-Tsurugi sensei bought him one...?”

“Our chibi⁴ sensei gave him that...?”

“A chocolate cornet, he said...?!”

“She gave him chocolate?!”

“That’s pretty cocky for Tsukuyomi!”

“Hand it over! All the teachers are one heart and one mind, so what’s yours is ours!”

“Hey, what are you all doing?! This is something Tsurugi-sensei gave me!” (This one was from my brother.)

“Shut up! This was the first time our chibi sensei went out on an errand, and the chocolate cornet she brought back is wasted on someone like you!”

“This is a place of training! A place where the strong win and the weak die!!!”

⁴ Cutesy word for “small.”

My brother was getting completely beat up.

“.....”

My brother had gotten beaten until he looked like a tattered rag, and the rest of the teachers divided his chocolate cornet with expressions of pure glee.

Tsurugi gave my brother a scornful look as he stood there completely unprotected while covering his face. He had been punched silly.

“You really are a pretty sad person, aren’t you...?”

She sighed and crouched down.

Her small figure was hidden by the desk, and couldn’t be seen by any of the other teachers.

Like that, she beckoned to my brother with her hand, and my brother also squatted down.

“What is it?”

“Keep this a secret ☆!”

Tsurugi took out a stick of chocolate, peeled its wrapper, and then stuffed it into my brother's mouth.

"I was hiding this from the others. I-It's not like this is because it's Valentine's day. It's just because I saw you being so pathetic and I just can't help but sympathize, alright? So don't get the wrong idea!"

".....?"

My brother looked confused, as if he was unsure of what "Valentine's Day" was.

Chapter 4: The Middle Sister, Kagami

This was something I heard later.

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Despite playing in the river so early in the morning, the third Yagami sister, Yagami Tama, arrived at school healthy and without any hint of a cold. Right when my brother was getting fed by Tsurugi, she was just in the middle of her lunch.

“Lunchtime ♪. Lunchtime ♪.”

Everyone had put their desks together and the students were eating lunch.

Tama crossed her arms and nodded (pointlessly).

“Tama works hard for this time every day.”

Tama thrust her hands into her bookbag, and singing all the while, she suddenly discovered the box that my brother had given her in the morning. She looked at the box, puzzled.

“Hm? What’s this? Tama, you know? Tama really likes the lunchbox that Kagamine bought her a few days ago... ah! Right, this is what Paparin gave Tama!”

It seemed she had forgotten.

“What could be inside...?”

Tama opened up the box.

“Fwaaaaaaaahhhh... ☆☆☆”

Tama’s eyes sparkled as she stared at a box of rather intricate-looking chocolates, the kind you wouldn’t be able to find in a convenience store.

“I-It’s chawcolate... ma’am! Umm, it’s fine if Tama eats this, right? Tama always gets cavities, so Tsurugi-nee doesn’t let her eat candy at home... Even though Tsurugi-nee eats a lot herself! So having all this chawcolate all to herself... Tama... Tama..... it’ll be fine!”

Tama was completely red as she picked up one chocolate with her fingers and sent it sailing into her mouth.

“Howawawaaaaa... it’s sweet... happyyyyy~... ☆☆☆”

Perhaps the chocolates looked really delicious, but the elementary schoolers around Tama suddenly took an interest and turned to look in her direction.

“T-Tama-chan! That’s great! Are those chocolates?!”

“Tama-chan has chocolates?!”

“W-Who are you giving those to?! What?! You’re eating them yourself?!”

“C-Could it be that Tama-chan doesn’t know what Valentine’s Day is...?”

“Hwa? What? Do you want some?” (This was Tama talking.)

Tama smiled at the meek-looking boy with glasses that sat closest to her.

“Sacchin showed Tama his homework, so he gets one chawcolate~”

Tama took the chocolate... or rather, from its shape it looked more like a precious jewel, and brought it to the mouth of her small classmate, beginning to feed him.

“Go ahhhh~” she said.

“T-T-T... Tama-chan, what are you doing?! That chocolate... you’re... I’m...?!”

“T-That’s not fair! Why only Satou?! Give some to me too!”

“Tama-chan isn’t paying attention right now, so I can get some chocolate from her... I can get some chocolate from her!”

“Hand it over!”

“Give it! I’ll kill you if I have to!”

“Ehh?! Ehh?! S-Stop! If everyone takes Tama’s chawcolates... she won’t be able to eat any of them anymore!! Hmph!!” (That one was Tama.)

The children swarmed around the chocolate like vultures, stealing more than half of them. Tama teared up and began her protest.

“So mean! You’re all so mean! Why are you taking away Tama’s chawcolates?! Hmph!! Tama got those from Papparini! They were Tama’s lunch! Tama hasn’t even eaten more than one! Ohh! Et tu, Brutus?!”

“Well, there’s nothing you could have done, Tama-chan.”

The girl who sat across from Sacchin spoke this time. Unlike Tama, she actually looked normal.

“Today is Valentine’s Day. If you bring chocolates to class, all the guys are going to act funny. Tama-chan is really popular, after all...”

“Va... len... tine?”

When the girl got a blank stare back from Tama, she continued casually.

“Oh, you really don’t know? Well, Valentine’s Day is...”

@@@@@

Let’s change scenes and go back to Konohana Sakuya Academy.

It was after school.

My brother had shown his face at the club he advised, the “Production Club” (although he was actually still covering his face). The club seemed to produce textbooks or something, but my brother seemed to have nothing to do and was completely free, so he was busy trying to whittle down someone’s MP.¹

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

¹ Reference to the Dancer class in Final Fantasy Tactics (pointed out by editor).

“...Um, sensei. Please stop silently dancing the Hare Hare Yukai dance.² It’s incredibly offputting.”

The middle sister of the three Yagami sisters, Yagami Kagami, looked up from the book she was silently reading and whispered in the same indifferent voice she always used.

“But Kagami-san, I don’t have anything to do and I’m completely free.”

“Please just read a book then. We have more than you could ever possibly need.”

And just as Kagami said, the “Production Club” clubroom had bookshelves erected in all four directions, and huge amounts of books were lined up on those shelves.

There were old books that I doubted anybody had ever read, reference books, historical timelines, maps... the shelves were completely filled with things like that.

“Funyaaa.”

Kagami let out a strange sound, and began to speak in a completely emotionless voice.

² The ending song dance from Haruhi Suzumiya.

“If you’re free, then you should go look around some of the other clubs. In such a big world like this, there should be someone somewhere who needs a teacher. Yes, there should be... I think.”

Kagami casually went on nonsensically. Kagami was in the same year as me, a first year in high school, and she seemed to be sixteen... Her height was average, there was nothing worth mentioning about her looks and physique, and she generally left quite a weak impression.

She always seemed sleepy, and in fact, she slept pretty often.

“Fufu, someone who needs me, you say...? Of course there’s someone like that!”

My brother seemed quite happy, and sauntered around the room.

“My cute, cute, lovely, adorable little sister! Sasami-san needs me! She always waits for me! She calls out for me! She loves me! Do you understand?! Shall I explain to you how amazing Sasami-san is?! First of all, more than anything, she’s..... hm?”

“.....”

Kagami was sound asleep.

“Kagami-san? Kagami-san?”

“Ah, I apologize. I fell asleep.”

Kagami wiped her mouth, raised her head, and grumbled with a serious look on her face.

“I had so little interest in what you were saying that I suddenly became sleepy. I already understand Tsukuyomi-sensei’s love for his little sister much more than I ever wanted to understand it, so I don’t need it explained to me again. To be honest, it’s quite annoying.”

“Ehhh... but I want to tell you! Please listen to me, Kagami-san! Ugh! You want to hear it too, I bet! If you sit there silently, I feel really awkward, so please talk with me!”

My brother danced about.

“Please pick something you want to talk about then. Like ‘Today’s Sasami-san,’ or ‘Yesterday’s Sasami-san,’ or ‘Tomorrow’s Sasami-san,’ or ‘An Embarrassing Story About Sasami-san,’ or ‘The Day I Argued With Sasami-san,’ or ‘Sasami-san’s

Hobbies and Interests’... you can even make some dice and roll them, and we can pick a topic based on that! Please, let’s have fun and talk about my most favorite girl in the whole world until we’re tired of it!”

“.....”

“Kagami-san?”

“I apologize. I fell asleep.”

-

“Fueeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeehnnnn!! Kagami-
neeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!!!”

-

Almost breaking open the door, Tama came rushing in with her red backpack on her back.

Tama’s elementary school was in the neighborhood, so she often ended up going to the clubroom to play after school.

She seemed in a daze as she jumped at Kagami and started crying.

“What in the world...”

Kagami seemed annoyed.

“Don’t jump on me please, Tama. You’re too big and heavy.”

“Waaah!”

Tama just sobbed at her sister’s calm and composed words, while my brother casually greeted her.

“Ah, we met this morning too, didn’t we, Tama-san? Was your lunch tasty?”

“Fyah, P-Paparin...”

Tama was acting unusually shy and her face flushed deep red. Acting like a child, Tama hugged Kagami close and began to squeeze her.

“You’re crushing me! I’m dying!!” Kagami let out a few cries, but Tama ignored them. Her eyes still watery, she next stared at my brother.

“Um, umm, you know, Tama...”

She gulped.

“T-Tama... loves Paparin, but... but... Tama is still an elementary schooler... so, maybe we should start as friends, umm... fueehhnn, Kagami-nee! What should Tama do?!”

“First get off of me. I’m going to die... please remember how ridiculously strong you are.”

Kagami was almost in a headlock, and she let out a feeble mumble.

Right after that...

-

“Ah, what’s this? Well well, looks like all three of us are here together.”

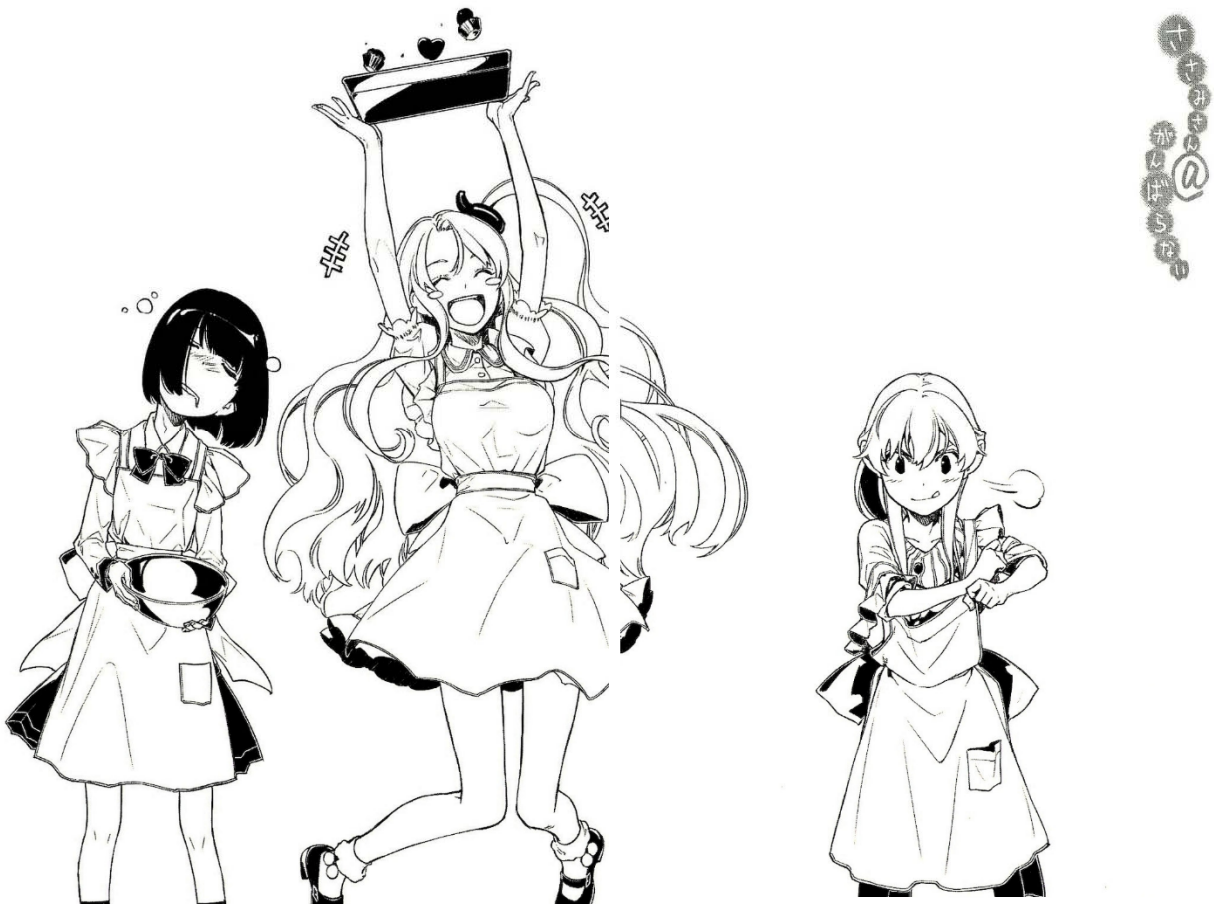
-

All of a sudden, Tsurugi peeked in from the other side of the wide-open door.

She seemed to be enjoying herself, and she had quite a childish expression on her face.

“I don’t know what you’re all talking about, but don’t leave your older sister out of it... fufufu.”³

³ Tsurugi’s somewhat-trademark laugh is actually “ishishishi.” The problem is that when you transliterate this into English, it hardly sounds like a laugh at all. So I went with an option that I felt carries a similar feeling.



Chapter 5: Give Me Chocolate (Front Half)

“Well, Valentine’s Day is...”

Tama was still clinging to Kagami and squeezing her head, but Kagami seemed to have decided to ignore it. She had returned to reading her book, but was also skillfully explaining Valentine’s Day.

“It’s a holiday primarily practiced in Christian nations, and it was originally the holiday dedicated to the Roman goddess Juno.”

“Juno, huh?”

Tsurugi mumbled, as if talking to herself.

“I guess in Greek mythology, Juno would be Hera... a proud and jealous goddess who goes around and kills all her husband’s lovers. But she’s also the goddess of marriage and the family, isn’t she...?”

“But the actual word ‘Valentine’ comes from Saint Valentinus.”

Kagami spoke on as if she was reciting something from a reference book.

“The Roman emperor at that time proclaimed that soldiers falling in love would decrease morale, so he made marriage illegal. But Saint Valentinus pitied these soldiers who had love stripped away from them, and he secretly married them. He was discovered and arrested, and eventually executed. February fourteenth is a holiday where we are meant to lament and pray for Saint Valentinus.”

“Ummm... ummmm...”

Clearly confused at hearing all this difficult talk, Tama muttered as she chewed on Kagami’s hair (she was like an animal...).

“But, umm, Tama’s classmate Nozomi said...”

Seeming somewhat embarrassed, Tama began to pull on Kagami's cheeks.

"She said that Valentine's was when... umm... when you c-c-c-confessed to the person you like..."

"Ah, well that's pretty much what it's become in Japan."

Kagami seemed to finally have gotten fed up with getting pushed around, and tried to forcibly push Tama's face away.

"Fufufufu, so Tama's already at an age where she's starting to care about that stuff?!"

Tsurugi seemed way too happy about that and shook her legs up and down (In her complete lack of manners, she had actually gotten on the table and was sitting there cross-legged. Maybe she was completely bored, but she was also playing on a handheld video game console).

"I like it. Valentine's Day, I mean."

"After all, maybe except for Christmas, it's much easier to make ero events happen on Valentine's Day than any other holiday!"

"Your viewpoint has been completely corrupted."

Kagami sent Tsurugi a displeased look, but Tsurugi didn't seem to mind.

"Well, without opportunities like this, people wouldn't be able to go through the embarrassment of confessing their love. Everyone's so busy with other things, and most people don't have the courage to journey into the unknown by confessing. But if kids without much love experience don't find love even through these special holidays, I'm not sure what they would do."

"I'm not interested, so I don't care."

"Hauuu, hauu..."

Kagami just continued reading her books, while Tama seemed to be overly sensitive to the word "love."

"And because of all that, when this time rolls around every year, the school starts going a bit crazy and you just can't calm down. All the other teachers start giving me suggestive glances. You want me to give you chocolate or something? You damn lolicons! If I bought chocolate for all of you, my wallet's gonna be damn empty! I mean, I'm the only one with any income in my family, and I have two dependents too!"

Ah, right. The two younger Yagami sisters were still students, so Tsurugi was the only one who actually worked.

Maybe she got annoyed, but Tsurugi started kicking my brother while she sprawled herself out on the table.

“Tama didn’t know about Valentine’s, so she probably didn’t, but did Kagami pass out chocolates? Whether it’s a duty or not, it’s an easy way to make you more popular with the boys, you know? And you can reap the rewards later. Make them carry heavy things for you and stuff like that...”

“You’re too calculating.”

Kagami’s expression didn’t change a bit.

“Funyaa. When I weigh the time it would take to make chocolates with the benefits I would receive afterwards from the boys, I don’t think it’s worth it. Also, I don’t even have any friends of the same sex, and I stand out from the crowd, so talking to a boy and giving him chocolates would be impossible for me.”

“Come on, try to enjoy youth a bit more, you...”

Tsurugi seemed a bit exasperated, and a bit worried.

“Now that I think about it, I haven’t seen you talking to anyone in school except for me... ah, but how about Tsukuyomi? Did you give him some chocolate? Even though you’re pretty bad when it comes to communicating, you can still talk with Tsukuyomi pretty well, right?”

“Huh?”

Kagami’s voice sounded just a bit more high-pitched.

“I-I don’t know what you could mean. It’s not like I get along that well with sensei. He’s just too clingy. You’re being illogical.”

“You don’t really have to deny it that strongly though...”

Tsurugi seemed at a loss, but she put her hand to her small chest and breathed a sigh of relief.

“I see, so Kagami didn’t pass any out... Tama also obviously didn’t prepare any chocolates... and there’s no way any other girls approached Tsukuyomi to give him chocolates, so... ehehe.”

She seemed happy about that, for some reason.

“Umm, Tsurugi-sensei.”

Baffled as he watched the three sisters talk, my brother nervously raised his hand.

“I’m not too sure what chocolates have to do with confessing, but exactly what kind of event are you saying Valentine’s Day is? Now that you mention it, I could definitely smell chocolate here and there today...”

“...Don’t tell me you don’t know either.”

Tsurugi was dumbfounded.

“Sometimes you’re so poorly informed that it’s really hard to imagine that you’re actually a teacher... Were you living under a rock all your life or something?”

“.....”

“Well, you know, there’s a certain etiquette when it comes to Valentine’s Day.”

My brother was being silent for once, but Tsurugi didn’t mind him and just continued speaking proudly.

“Fundamentally, it’s a day where girls give boys chocolates. While they’re confessing their love. The smart ones buy a lot, and also pass them out to their female friends as a sign of friendship. Boys also sometimes give girls chocolate too... but in other words, it’s a day where you give the person you love chocolates.”

“Ahh, that’s why Tsurugi-sensei gave me a chocolate cornet, right?”

“Wha-?! No, stop getting the wrong idea, you stinking d*ck! D-Don’t get carried away, I bought you that because everything else was sold out!”

“Well, either way, in the end the chocolate cornet got stolen by the other teachers...”

“Then go and take that love back.”

“But I got a chocolate stick instead, so I’m completely satisfied~~”

As I watched them talking like that... I felt a wave of relief wash over me from somewhere.

I see. Oniichan didn’t know what Valentine’s Day was.

That’s why he acted like he always did this morning, even though I had gone out of my way to give him his “lunch.”

It wasn’t like he didn’t want something like that or like he hated me... he just didn’t know what it was. And because he had no idea, he gave it to a hungry Tama as a “lunchbox.”

Geez.

“But Tsurugi-sensei, there’s something that’s bothering me then... Is today the only day you can give out that chocolate?”

“Eh? Ahh, well today’s Valentine’s Day, after all. It would just feel off to give the chocolates some other day. Why do you ask?”

“B-B-But, Sasami-san hasn’t given me chocolates yet...”

My brother began to tremble.

“That’s... that can’t be... it’s impossible...! Sasami-san isn’t like me... she actually is knowledgeable in matters of the world, so she definitely should know about Valentine’s Day... but even then, she still hasn’t given me any chocolates... and I thought Sasami-san loved me...”

No, I did give you some.

You just didn’t realize it.

“Ah, she’s probably planning on giving me the chocolates at dinner. She’ll wear a maid outfit, her face will be all red, and she’ll go ‘Oniichan, I love you~~!’”

Why the hell would I wear a maid outfit?

And I don’t remember ever saying something like “Oniichan, I love you~~!”

“Well, Sasami-san is a hikikomori, so she wouldn’t be able to go buy chocolate, would she? Ah, I’ve solved it! Sasami-san really wanted to give me chocolates, but she was really frustrated because she couldn’t go out to buy them!”

Oniichan, haven’t you heard of these useful things called “mail orders”?

As I sat there dumbfounded, my brother violently stood up.

“I cannot allow this to happen! I have to go and buy huge amounts of chocolate!”

“Huh? Right now?”

Tsurugi turned completely red.

“D-Don’t be an idiot, Tsukuyomi! The reverse holiday where the guys give the girls gifts is White Day, on March fourteenth! You really don’t have to go out right now and buy chocolate just so you can confess to me...”

“Neesan, sensei never said he was giving the chocolate to you.”

Kagami looked up at my brother as he put on clothes and prepared to go out.

“But sensei... neesan might have said this earlier, but in this country, Valentine’s Day is fundamentally when the girls are the ones giving the boys chocolates. There’s no need for sensei to give anybody any chocolate. Well, it’s not like I wouldn’t accept if you decided to give me some, though...”

“He’s not saying he’s giving any to you either, Kagami.”

Tsurugi and Kagami glared at each other.

Tama stood there watching her sisters with a puzzled expression, but then grabbed onto my brother’s clothes.

“U-Umm, Paparin.”

My brother was taller than Tama, so Tama was looking at them through upturned eyes.

And she was trembling.

“There’s, um, something Tama wants to ask you. This morning, um, Paparin, he gave Tama chawcolates... y-you give chawcolates to the person you l-like, right? So Paparin gave Tama chawcolates because... umm...”

“.....?”

Tama spoke very hesitantly, and then nervously asked a question.

“Is it because Paparin... likes Tama?”

Absolutely oblivious when it came to delicate matters like this, my brother just cocked his head to the side in confusion and took her question completely at face value.

“Of course! I love Tama-san!”

Granted, my brother “loved” everyone.

Although, I didn’t know whether his “love” for me was the same kind of love he would have for the opposite sex... well, let’s leave that for now.

“Hwah.”

Tama boiled up, began to sway from side to side, and hugged Kagami tightly.

“Hwawawawa...”

Squeeze squeeze. Creak creak.

Kagami banged her hand on the table. “Uncle, uncle! Let go!” she yelled, but Tama ignored her and mumbled innocently to my brother.

“Tama does too.”

She was red from ear to ear.

“Tama... loves Paparin.”

“Thank you very much!”

Tsurugi looked from my quite-happy brother, to Tama who was acting pretty out of whack, to Kagami who was banging on death’s door, and she narrowed her eyes in suspicion.

“Hey, Tama, what’s the meaning of this? I want to know how you two seem to be suddenly getting along so well. Why don’t you tell your oneechan the details? I promise I won’t get mad.”

“Okay, um, Tsurugi-nee!”

Tama returned to her usual innocent self, and raised both her arms in the air happily.

“This morning, Tama got chawcolates from Paparin!”

“What?!?!”

Tsurugi leapt up like a cat, grabbed at my brother’s face, and began to aggressively dishevel his hair. She seemed almost like a demon.

“You asshole, don’t go and just casually raise flags¹ with my little sister! You gave Tama chocolates?! What happened to all those events you’ve been accumulating with me?! You and your ‘I won’t choose anyone. I love everyone!’ attitude... you must be going for a harem end, aren’t you?!”

“Eh?! That can’t be! I’ve been going straight on the Sasami Route my entire life!”

“You idiot! If you go on the route of your real sister in real life, you’re heading right for a bad end where you get arrested!”

...Stop putting everything in terms of eroge please.

Tsurugi stayed clinging to my brother, but skillfully turned to look at Tama and thrust a finger at her.

¹ Like in eroge, where the lingo is that certain events raise “flags” that lead to more events later.

“You’re going down an evil path if you let boys give you chocolates! But also, Tama, he gave you chocolates this morning, right?”

That’s before he actually knew about Valentine’s Day! So there wasn’t any hidden meaning to the chocolates he gave you! Don’t be tricked like that!”

“A-Alright...”

Tama seemed bewildered, but she soon gave off an innocent smile.

“But still, Tama was really happy.”

@@@@@

So even someone like my brother can get wrapped up in a love-comedy-esque situation like that...

But anyways...

“Alright then.”

I took off the “Oniichan Surveillance Tool” and gave a nice, long stretch.

Wearing that thing for too long definitely made me sweaty and made my shoulders stiff.

I fell sideways and lay sprawled there. I put a few eyedrops into my eyes and shut them.

“What a relief, what a relief.”

It was a bit irritating how I suddenly felt like a load had been taken off my chest.

But I really was relieved.

My brother just didn’t know what Valentine’s Day was.

So he couldn’t possibly know the true meaning behind the “lunch” I gave him this morning.

In the end, my brother still loved me more than anybody else in the world, and made me his first priority in everything he did.

Though, taking advantage of his affections and indulging like this was probably not that healthy...

“.....”

I lifted my body up and once again faced my computer.

And I couldn't keep myself from smiling.

“Maybe I should go and buy oniichan some chocolates again.”

Once you were a hikikomori for long enough, you started talking to yourself more and more.

“But it would be bad if he got cocky over it. At the same time, oniichan knows about Valentine's Day now, so if I didn't give him any he would probably get pretty annoying. It's also a bit too weird to tell him now that the lunch I gave him in the morning was a box of chocolates... so the best case is he kneels to the floor and begs ‘Oh, Sasami-san, please give me chocolates!’ and I show him some mercy, like ‘well, I guess I'll take pity on you, you dirty bastard’ or something...”

I moved my mouse to my favorites folder and clicked the icon that took me to the homepage for a mail order site.

In turn, I jumped to the “foodstuffs” page, then the “sweets” page, then the “chocolates” page.

There was a feature section on Valentine's Day, and a number of types of chocolate were on display.

I didn't have to go for something too expensive. Although, our family had plenty of money. It was just that the expensive ones probably just came with more chocolates... my brother wouldn't be able to finish all of it himself.

I explored the site as I thought about stuff like that.

Mail ordering was convenient, and a hikikomori like me wasn't able to use any other method to buy things, but it was definitely a disadvantage to not be able to hold the product in my hand and inspect it myself.

But for food, if you didn't buy and try it out, you wouldn't be able to know what it tasted like...

"Also, would it actually get here if I ordered it today...?"

I glanced at my computer's clock, and saw that it was five in the afternoon.

"Maybe if I placed a rush order it would just barely get here... honestly, I use this site so much that they should just go and get a helicopter to deliver it to me really fast... The company's name sounds like it was taken right out of Kamen Rider², so they should hurry up and help a damsel in distress like me."

I grumbled complaints at the site, when I saw a section labeled "People who bought this item also bought the following."

² Kamen Rider is a classic Japanese special effects show, probably similar to Power Rangers. I'm not absolutely sure, but I think they're referring to Amazon.

Maybe because so many love-stricken girls bought so much chocolate on Valentine's Day, I even found makeup in that section.

But in the same section, I also found the newest volume of a shoujo manga I liked.

"Ah, the new volume of this is out... but I mean, I didn't really like the last volume too much... it felt just like filler. I really just couldn't take it anymore... if they just fool around this volume too, I really think I'm going to pass on buying it..."

I acted pretty cocky (but I was being harsh because I liked it so much), and checked the plot summary for the new volume.

But then, I was completely astonished.

-

This Volume's Plot Summary: The two protagonists like each other, but they couldn't be honest with themselves and ended up arguing. But after seeing Mikiko's tears, Takuya reflected on his own actions and resolved to become a first-rate chocolatier. Chocolate was everything. Chocolate was sublime. In fact, to hell with Mikiko. A shocking new twist!

-

"That twist's way too twisty!"

Without meaning to, I yelled out.

The last volume had nothing to do with chocolate! What the hell was this?! Last time I checked, this was a romance manga with a hint of mystery and stuff like fortune telling mixed in, set at a normal high school!

Why the hell did Takuya want to be a chocolatier all of a sudden?! Just the last volume, didn't he say that he was only interested in soccer?! This made no sense!

Taking a better look, I saw that the manga title had been "Love of the Angels," but it had been changed to "Love of the Angels and Chocolate."³ Where the hell had the chocolate come from?!

"Huh? Huh?"

At the same time, I realized something.

Maybe I had mistaken this for another manga...? But the character names were the same... and as I thought about that, I clicked on more related items, and discovered how bizarre things had really become.

"What... is going on...?"

That word had been unnaturally mixed in with the other manga and novel summaries too.

-

³ Might be a nod to "Love and Elections and Chocolate," or "Koi to Senkyo to Chocolate," a popular visual novel.

Anime adaptation announced! The school festival approaches, and the two protagonists' love and chocolate becomes deeper and deeper... a battle action series with swords, magic, and chocolate!! ... This story contains extreme descriptions and chocolate!!

Every single product had "chocolate" somewhere in the description.

As I clicked through more and more of those descriptions, things got even stranger.

-

This story is a chocolate that choco'ed a chocolate contaminated with chocolate! In this sad romance, the two chocolates choco'ed with each other and then chocolated!

-

The summaries were becoming nonsense.

"What the... maybe it was Valentine's Day and someone was trying to pull a prank...? And things would go back to normal by tomorrow...? But I haven't heard of anyone planning a ridiculous prank like that... w-wha?"

Bleep. The screen suddenly went black.

Nothing was showing anymore. The electricity still seemed to be working, but the screen had blacked out.

I could only see my bewildered face reflected on the dark screen.

“Eh, my computer broke?!”

I became uneasy and tried to move my mouse and press keys on my keyboard, but the computer didn’t respond.

“Impossible... I spent so much time and money putting this computer together too...”

In the end, *that’s* what I was worried about... I probably should have been more worried about other things.

An abnormality had already opened a fissure in my everyday life that was beyond repair. I should have been able to guess what was happening, but I pretended not to see, pretended not to notice, and this “irregularity” hit me full force.

I should have understood my own position in the world, and I should have moved to do something about this.

In other words, I should have tried hard.

But I did not try hard.

Rather, I locked myself in my room, indulged in my brother’s affections, and lived a lazy life.

But to be punished by the Heavens because of that... it was still way too cruel.

-

chocolate...

-

“Hm?”

Suddenly, words appeared on my darkened computer screen. It looked almost like a screen saver.

Those words had only appeared for a second, so I thought I was seeing things.

But soon I understood.

This was obviously no longer a prank or a joke... rather, it was a mischievous “irregularity” that had already begun to “alter” my reality.

Those words began to run across and fill my screen, almost like a swarm of insects.

-

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-

“Kya...”

A repulsive chill ran through me, and I threw my head back without meaning to.

“Kyaaaaahh?!”

At the same time, some unidentifiable substance, neither liquid nor solid, but somewhere in between, gushed up out of my computer screen... it rushed towards me and crushed me, and I soon lost consciousness...

Chapter 6: Give Me Chocolate (Back Half)

And so, in that way, I fainted...

The account which follows is not something I witnessed myself, but rather something I figure must be close to what happened.

It was hard to believe, it was unrealistic, and some of this was probably just my own fantasizing, so I really didn't want to think too much about the possibility that such wildly extraordinary events actually happened.

@@@@@

"This is a bit of a problem..."

My brother was wandering about "Yaoyorozuya,"¹ a huge supermarket that catered to the townspeople of Amenonuboko.

He had gone back to the classroom to fetch his briefcase, and was covering his face with it as he strolled around the supermarket. He was probably planning on going right home after that.

¹ Yaoyorozu is the collective name for all the spirits in the Shinto religion.

“Yaoyorozuya” was almost like a foreign supermarket in how pointlessly big it was and how confusing the layout was (it also reminded me of one of those places you would see people run to in movies when zombies attacked). The townspeople always complained about how they could never find what they were looking for in the store.

The store employees zoomed across the polished floors on roller skates.

“Hmm, I really didn’t know...”

My brother looked all around him and sighed.

Shelves packed with items for sale stretched out horizontally all around him, seeming to almost continue to infinity.

“It’s fine if this is the food section, but this should have been the consumer electronics section...”

It seemed that my brother had listened to me when I told him yesterday to buy lots of printer paper, and had dutifully decided to grab some while he was in the store.

“There sure are a lot of kinds of chocolates these days...”

In any case, the space around my brother was enveloped with a sweet aroma.

He should have been on the floor where they sold computer goods.

But all the mice and keyboards, the software and computers, the motherboards and other standard computer goods...

All of it had been turned into chocolate.

“Ohh, some of these are pretty detailed too.”

My brother was quite impressed as he stared at the laptop computer next to him.

Everything from the small mouse to the keyboard to the screen was completely brown.

Even the interior seemed to have been reproduced out of chocolate, and it still retained some of the functions of a laptop. My brother moved the mouse and clicked on an icon, and a clip began to play on screen.

A little chocolate person was on screen. “Today’s weather is chocolate with some white chocolate, as well as double chocolate in some places...” it said, going on and on about strange things.

It was clear that something completely incomprehensible was going on, but my brother could not recognize this as an alteration.

Well, it wasn't just my brother. Most normal people hadn't realized that an alteration had taken place.

People like me who realized there was something strange going on were definitely in the minority.

"Alterations"... they would change the consciousness and thoughts of the people living in a specific area, and even go as far as to turn history and physical laws upside down.

Other than people like me, or people of the highest order like the Yagami sisters, most people wouldn't feel that anything had changed at all or was even out of place, and would just continue to live their lives.

They would just adapt to these new bizarre circumstances while still holding on to their old memories and values.

"I'm going to buy lots of chocolate, give it to Sasami-san as a present, and then Sasami-san is going to turn to me all tsundere and go, 'I can't eat so much chocolate. Here, oniichan can have a little! D-Don't get the wrong idea! I just don't want to eat too much and get fat, alright?!' ...That way I will definitely be able to get chocolate from Sasami-san! Ufufufu!"

My brother mumbled some pretty pathetic things as he tottered about unsteadily.

“But having all these different kinds of chocolate here really makes it hard... which should I buy, which should I buy... which one would make Sasami-san the happiest? Ahh...”

My indecisive big brother would not make it back home for quite a while.

@@@@@

Of course, the three Yagami sisters had already realized that there was something wrong with the world.

Those girls were not normal beings in any sense.

I had a vague feeling that they weren't normal, but until this “Valentine's Day Tragedy,” I had no idea just how outrageously abnormal they were.

They weren't just people who were “a bit strange.”

To be precise, I don't even know if you could call them “people.”

It wasn't like I had a perfect understanding of these alterations and of the three Yagami sisters.

That's why I had looked into these things, studied them, and even written up reports on my findings. For a lazy person like me, I had put quite a bit of thought into figuring out those girls, but...

"Hnnnggg..."

We were back in the "Production Club" clubroom.

In a show of bad manners, Tsurugi was lying down on top of the table playing on her portable game console. A pink-haired girl was looking at her from inside the screen with teary eyes, saying "Sorry... I still want to just stay friends with Tsurugi-kun." Tsurugi sighed.

She turned her game console off and tossed it to the side. She began to grumble, seeming irritated.

"What should we do here..."

"It would not be very upstanding to just allow this to continue."

Kagami was reading a book titled "A History of Gas Stoves: The Art of Controlling Propane and Butane"... Was that book seriously that interesting? But she snapped the book closed and rubbed her drowsy eyes.

“Funyaa.” She yawned.

“This large a magnitude of alteration has not happened since... since we began to observe Tsukuyomi Kamiomi. The entire world is being turned into chocolate. When taking into consideration the current rate of dispersion of the alteration...”

A mechanical clicking filled the air, and Kagami’s eyes emitted a faint light.

“In around seven hours, all of Japan will have been turned into chocolate.”

“All of Japan? This isn’t going to affect places outside Japan?”

“It won’t. In the end, Amaterasu is Japan’s highest god, so I think the various gods of the various other nations will defend their territories against this. This alteration is limited to the nation of Japan: its land, its territories, and the conceptions of Japan that exist within the thoughts of its people.”

“Yeah, the scale is too big and we didn’t get any warning beforehand either. And if you think about where the alteration is striking... I guess the cause of it all has to be Amaterasu. Or no, that’s not really right. The origin of the alteration is all of the ‘Myriad Gods’ who submit to Amaterasu.”

“Umm, umm.”

Tama had been left behind in the conversation, and she raised her hand with a confused expression.

“W-What happened then? Don’t leave Tama out like that! Hmph!”

Seeing Tama near tears, Tsurugi just sighed.

“Ahh, I guess Tama still can’t really distinguish alterations. Kagami can just save the data for the correct state of the world and can compare the two, and I can just distinguish an alteration from my own past experience, but compared to that I guess Tama is a bit slow... well, whatever. I’ll explain it to you later, so just be a good girl for now.”

“Okay! Tama will be a good girl!”

Tama nodded energetically, and for some reason sat on her knees on the chair and quieted down.

Tsurugi watched Tama, a bit astonished, before hopping down from the table and lightly touching down on the ground.

“I get the feeling that this is the type of alteration where we could leave it alone and the world would eventually go back to normal... but in the really odd chance that the gods just aren’t satisfied, the alteration would just speed up and might start changing things in different ways... and from how big the scale of this

alteration is, it might start bothering countries outside of Japan too. It's annoying, but maybe we should settle all this before the overseas gods start trying to meddle."

"Funyaa."

Kagami widened her eyes.

"How unusual. Neesan is being proactive."

"I wouldn't try to interfere if I could help it. The gods are just doing what they want to do... but when the alterations get this big, no one knows how crazy things could get if we just leave it alone. Well, the physical laws are also getting changed along with everything else, so I really don't think the world's going to suddenly end or something..."

Tsurugi went over to the container that held the Production Club's cleaning supplies, and she took out a long, thin, scarlet cloth bundle.

She casually gripped that in one hand and headed for the exit of the room.

"I mean, also, this alteration is just really stupid, and I've never seen one as ridiculous as this. The people who've had their consciousnesses altered might not see the difference, but I can tell that an alteration has happened, and I don't think I can adapt to a world made completely of chocolate."

And then, Tsurugi beckoned to her sisters.

“Kagami, Tama, let’s go. Just this once, we don’t need to think too hard about this. Just treat it like an accident... and let’s just clean it up as fast as we can.”

“But... is that even possible?”

Kagami seemed a bit uneasy as she walked towards her sister.

“What’s happening might be ridiculous, but its scale is quite large, so can we really do anything about it...?”

“Don’t worry, I have a plan. Just trust your sister. Come on, Tama, you get over here too.”

“T-Tama’s legs... they fell asleep...”

Tama was now in quite a pitiable state because she had been pointlessly sitting on her knees.

Even so, she tottered over to join her other two sisters. Tsurugi put a hand on the doorknob.

“Before we plunge into the center of the alteration, I’ll explain the plan simply to you two.”

Tsurugi began to write an incantation on the doorknob with her red pen, singing lightly about a “door to ev*rywhere” without even caring about copyright.²

“Kagami will be sitting out just this once. Unlike when the alteration is small or when we’re facing other humans, Kagami isn’t really suited for going against alterations that are this huge. But we’re going to definitely put Tama to work. Tama... *you’re hungry*, aren’t you?”

“Tama’s stomach’s so empty it’s stuck to her back!”

Tama raised her hands with all her might.

“Paparin gave Tama chocolates for lunch, but Tama’s chocolates were all eaten by her classmates! So Tama is really hungry!”

“I see. Then rejoice... you can eat as much as you want.”

Fufufu. Tsurugi laughed.

@@@@@

The strategy meeting (sort of) had ended, and Tsurugi casually opened the door.

² Doraemon reference.

That door should have been the completely normal door of the Production Club in the club wing of Konohana Sakuya Academy... but almost as if space and time had warped, that door now led straight outside.

Outside, into a brown world that had been pretty much completely turned into chocolate.

There were spots of white chocolate and strawberry chocolate, but the majority of it was just normal chocolate.

This incredibly normal town... the town in which I lived, had already been turned into chocolate candy. It was as if everything had been covered with light brown cellophane.

It might have been Valentine's Day, but this was just a bit...

Anything and everything was chocolate, chocolate, chocolate.

The roads, the signs, the guardrails... the cars, the bikes, and even the vending machines... all the flats and apartment buildings that lined the road, all the way down to the leaves on the trees...

"It's obviously pretty strange when you look at it..."

Tsurugi squatted and picked up an empty can that was lying by her feet. It was labeled nonsensically as “Chocolate Cola. Ingredients: chocolate extract, chocolate coloring, chocoleral, chocolate sugar, vitamin chocolate. Volume: 500 mL chocolate.”

Looking up at the sky, Tsurugi saw the clouds were even made of chocolate. How exactly were they staying in the air?

“Hwawaawawaaaa... ☆☆☆”

Tama’s eyes sparkled.

“This is all chawcolate? Waah, Tama, you know, umm, Tama reaaaaaaally likes chawcolate ☆! Hey hey, Tsurugi-nee! Can Tama eat this? But Tama might not be able to eat dinner anymore! Chawco, chawco, chawcolaaaate~~ ☆☆ Sweet, melty chawcolaate~~ ☆☆☆”

A bit amazed, Tsurugi stared at Tama as Tama began singing.

“You sure are pretty relaxed about it... but seriously, everything’s been turned to chocolate, hasn’t it... I’ve always wanted a house made of candy like in Hansel and Gretel, but when you see it in reality you really don’t feel like eating anymore... everything’s just chocolate. Who in the world would be able to eat this?”

Tsurugi walked along the soft chocolate road in her flip-flops.

“That’s Tsukuyomi’s house over there, right?”

Tsurugi pointed in the direction of the house that I shared with my brother.

Even this incredibly average house had been turned brown, from the walls to the garden.

“Why are we going there? The cause of the alteration is Tsukuyomi-sensei, isn’t it? And he appears to be at Yaoyorozuya. He still hasn’t gone home.”

Kagami strained her ears and relayed that information.

But Tsurugi just brought her sisters all the way to the front of our house.

“The alteration this time was not caused through Tsukuyomi’s will. Rather, the things around Tsukuyomi are just trying to make him happy.

The best way to resolve this is to make it clear to the gods that their actions are pointless. Punching or killing Tsukuyomi won’t stop this alteration.”

“Hm...”

Kagami seemed to be thinking about something, but her usually sleepy eyes suddenly sharpened and she guarded herself.

“Neesan!!”

Kagami was looking right at our front door.

From within my house came an eerie sound, almost as if lava were flowing violently.

Something began to come into sight.

“I see it. Looks like an evil god is taking advantage of this alteration and is having a bit of fun with it... Kagami, stay back. This isn’t something you can deal with just through pure physical strength. Tama, rejoice. You can eat however much you want today.”

“Really?”

Tama put a finger on her lips, and yelled in pure, innocent glee.

In the next moment...

The door flung itself open, and a brown substance erupted outwards, almost like an avalanche.

Like some gigantic dragon, that substance attacked the three Yagami sisters and tried to swallow them whole.

“Chawcolaaaaate~~~ ☆☆☆”

Tama’s eyes sent out sparks as she jumped right into that torrent of her own will.

In the next moment... something inexplicable happened.

From where Tama had leapt in, the brown, chocolate-like substance began to twist and warp, and as if being dismantled, began to vanish.

It was being eaten. That was the only way to describe it.

“Of course, this is just a lower god of substance... Compared to Tama’s divinity, he doesn’t even come close. If he tries to go against her head on he’s just going to be eaten. Pretty appropriate for him to become Tama’s meal.”

Chuckling, Tsurugi also rushed into the fray and chased after Tama. Kagami hurriedly kept up.

And thus, the three Yagami sisters set foot in my house.

Chocolate still came flying at them endlessly, but when the chocolate came in contact with Tama it just disappeared.

“Tama, only eat the things that actually attack us! If you start eating the walls or the floors the house is going to come crashing down!”

“Okaaaay~~!”

Tama gave an energetic response as she continued her “meal” with an expression of ecstasy on her face.

“I guess ‘Sasami-san’ is on the second floor...”

Tsurugi said my name.

The inside of the house looked like it had been submerged under an ocean, and was filled with a brown liquid, making anything and everything a jumbled mess.

It was even hard to judge where the stairs were just by looking.

“Neesan, over there.”

Unlike Tama, Kagami didn't seem to be able to "eat" the chocolate, and as Tama defended against the chocolate avalanche, Kagami stood behind her and timidly pointed in a certain direction.

And yes, the stairs were certainly there.

Tsurugi nodded cheerfully.

"Alright! Tama! Make sure we're not attacked from behind! Take the rear!"

"Okay! Tama will take the rear! Here she goes~~!"

Tama happily closed the distance between her and her sisters.

The three of them began to go up the stairs, with Tsurugi in the lead, followed by Kagami, and with Tama bringing up the rear.

Tama kept the chocolate which attacked at bay; it was almost like there was an invisible shield just around her.

But the muddy torrent attacked from the front as well. Judging from just volume and force, the chocolate that attacked from the front was more violent.

But Tsurugi just held up the crimson cloth bundle in her hand (there seemed to be something long and thin in the bundle)... and just like with Tama, the torrent broke off and vanished.

“Hyaahh!!”

Tsurugi opened the door to my room, almost punching it down.

And almost like she was at the scene of a fire, an explosive fountain of brown erupted from the room, in quantities that were far beyond what they had seen before.

“As I thought, the root of the problem is here...!”

Tsurugi defended against the torrent as she reached her hand into the cloth bundle and pulled out its contents in the next instance.

It was a single Japanese katana.

Or rather... the design was definitely Japanese, but it was a rather old-looking, double-edged sword.

Rather than a weapon, it looked more like a work of art.

Tsurugi pulled the katana out of its scabbard, and the pristine blade glittered.

“You assholes... don’t think that just because she’s weaker now that you can take on this lovely Tsurugi-chan!”

Letting out an angry roar, Tsurugi swung her sword diagonally downwards from her shoulder.

A thunderous rumbling erupted, almost as if a fissure were opening in the earth, and the brown dragon closing in on Tsurugi splintered into pieces and vanished.

In the next instant, the state of the room became clear.

The ultimate source of the entire avalanche of brown... was the computer right in front of me.

The machine was still stubbornly spitting out waves of brown, and with a single leap Tsurugi closed the distance between herself and my computer.

Yes, my beloved computer number one, which I had spent money, time, and effort in building myself.

“Don’t waste my time, you damn troublemaker!”

With a war cry, Tsurugi cleanly split my computer in half.

Her sword easily ate into my computer, cut through it, and destroyed it.

At the same time, Tsurugi turned around and shouted at Kagami.

“Kagami... project the world with your ‘mirror!’”³

“I thought my participation was not needed... well, I suppose if an evil god showed up, then I have no other choice. Tama! Take neesan and get away from here!”

“Okay!”

Tama rushed up to Tsurugi like a wild animal, held her under her armpits, and broke through the window, leaping outside. When she made sure they had left, Kagami spoke more clearly and crisply than she ever had before. Both her eyes widened, with not even a hint of sleepiness in them.

“Human world, return to that form in which you were meant to be.”

-

In the next moment, a light erupted from Kagami’s eyes, and began to fill the brown world with color.

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³ In fact, “Kagami” means mirror in Japanese.

“Hmm. ♪ Humhmmmmm. ♪”

My brother walked along.

He was still surrounded by a world of brown.

A chocolate car drove along a chocolate road. Seeing the car, a chocolate cat dove off the chocolate road into a chocolate house, knocked down a chocolate potted plant, and was screamed at by a chocolate woman. But my brother had no way of detecting the alteration, and so he just continued to walk along as if this was the most natural scenery in the world.

“I sure bought a lot...”

He held his briefcase in his hand, along with a plastic bag (made of chocolate).

That bag was filled to bursting with both normal chocolates and abnormal chocolates.

He seemed to have remembered to buy the printing paper for me, but that paper was also made of chocolate.

“I wonder if this will make Sasami-san happy...”

That might have been the only thing my brother was thinking as he tottered weirdly up to our front door and entered the house.

If he judged the inside of the house based on what he had seen outside, he probably would have been really confused.

The inside was completely normal.

It was completely normal as judged by our usual, everyday standards.

There was no chocolate. The entranceway was completely normal, with not a stone out of place.

There was a day-to-day calendar, a shoebox, and a decorative plant.

My brother sat himself down in the entranceway, took off his shoes, and leaving his briefcase behind, he went up the stairs with the plastic bag swinging from his hand.

“Sasamisaaan~~ Your oniichan’s home~~”

He knocked on my door and waited for a while.

I almost never responded when he knocked anyways, so naturally my brother decided to open my door and come in.

The inside of my room was also completely normal.

There was only one inexplicable thing: the computer that had been cleanly split in half and was scattered apart on the floor.

Looking inside the machine, it was clear that the interior of the broken PC was also not made out of chocolate.

These absolutely normal things would still seem incredibly unnatural in this world that had been completely transformed into chocolate, but my brother acted like nothing was wrong and just looked around him.

“Sasami-san? It seems today is Valentine’s Day! It’s a day you give the person you like chocolates! It seems that normally it’s the girls who give chocolates to the boys, but my love transcends age and gender, so I didn’t think it was any problem and I bought lots of-“

And then, my brother was rendered speechless.

I was standing like a statue right next to my broken computer.

“S-Sasami-san...”

But my entire body was brown, having been turned into chocolate.

Everything, from my hair to my fingertips, had been completely turned into chocolate.

I couldn't move even an inch; I was frozen to the spot with a happy expression on my face.

My brother gulped.

“I-I see...”

He seemed incredibly happy.

“I see now, I think I see now... Sasami-san! What you're trying to tell me is 'I am the chocolate!' Am I right?! Your oniichan completely understands now! Alright then, your oniichan will grant your every wish! He's going to lick you, and softly bite into you, and... and...”

My brother spouted some ridiculous nonsense as he came charging at me.

But in the next instant, my statue (I guess it was a statue?) began to tremble.

Don't.

Screw.

With.

Me!!!

“Ugyaaaahhh!!!”

Letting out a scream that was completely unbecoming for a girl, I violently struggled.

When I did that, the layer of chocolate covering me on the outside began to crack and fall on the floor.

Ugh, dammit, my skin can finally breathe again!

“O-Ohhh...”

My brother let out a strange noise, because...

Because under the chocolate shell that was peeling off, I was completely naked.

I had tried to guard myself with all my strength against the alteration, but as a result only my body had escaped the effects.

The clothes I wore were out of reach by my spiritual energy and completely under the control of the god of substance, so they had been transformed into chocolate, and were now peeling off.

Once I realized what was happening, I took one look at my spellbound brother, who looked like some religious believer who had just met his Messiah, and quickly took to covering my breasts and my lower body with my hands.

“Oniichan dieeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee~!!!!!!!!”

Letting out a yell that was completely unbecoming for a younger sister, I promptly kneed my brother in the face.

My body might have been weak, but there were times when a girl just had to knock someone out no matter what, even if it meant burning through all her life force.

“Aooo...”

My brother let out his death cry, sounding like he was fully satisfied with his life, before collapsing on the spot and lying there motionlessly.

I took heavy breaths, my body trembling, before covering myself with a big towel and opening the folding screen to the storage closet in the corner of my room.

And inside there was...

“.....” “.....” “.....”

Probably because my brother had come home earlier than expected, the three Yagami sisters didn't have a chance to get out of the house and were happily stowing away in my storage closet.

“Ummmm.....”

Tsurugi was red from ear to ear and was trembling from embarrassment. The minute she saw me, she averted her gaze and began to speak.

“We... umm... h-had no choice?”

“Get. The. Hell. OUT!!!”

I blew up.

I picked up the metal bat that was right next to me. It was meant to protect myself against suspicious people (like a brother who couldn't hold in his love for his little sister anymore), but today I would use it to beat those three Yagami sisters to hell.

All while tears filled my eyes.

All while acting purely on impulse.

"Get out! Get out~~!! This is *my house!!!*"

-

And thus...

After various inexplicable events had thrown things into chaos and etched a lingering sense of embarrassment in my maidenly heart, the curtain finally dropped on the "Valentine's Day Tragedy" and the first large-scale alteration we encountered.

I would go into more details on these "alterations" and the method that the three Yagami sisters had used this time to deal with them in a report I planned to write later.

"....."

I shuffled back into bed, pulling the futon covers over my head and stubbornly staying in bed.

I'm really tired, oniichan.

Chapter 7: Tsukuyomi Sasami's Investigations (Part 1)

*****What is an "Alteration"*****

This world (or more precisely, this country) is controlled by the "Myriad Gods." The "Myriad Gods" belong to an ideology that is unlike Christianity, in which there is only one God, or Greek Mythology, which is filled with legends of many gods, but rather is a system of belief that rests on the idea that "gods" inhabit each and every thing in this world.

According to that ideology, everything from the pebbles by the roadside, to buildings and arts and crafts, to animals and weeds, and in the end to even grand-scale conceptual objects like the weather, the physical laws, and the cities... all of those things were inhabited by "gods." The "Myriad" in "Myriad Gods" meant "many," and it makes sense; if even all the garbage over there had gods living inside, then the number of gods would surely be too many to count.

The word "god" may have a suspicious ring to it, but these gods have a sense of self. They are self-aware, they have their own hearts, and they have their own personalities. The "Myriad Gods" have their own thoughts, emotions, and are so-called anthropomorphic gods. There is no exception, from the highest god who rules the sun, Amaterasu, to the god that rules that eraser over there. The gods are thus endowed with a sense of humanity, or at least what seems like it.

In the normal world we know, or rather, the world that we are led to believe exists through our "common sense," the idea that gods inhabit everything is difficult to perceive.

I will expand on this later, but the world that we take for granted is actually a world that was made convenient for humans through “alterations.” And as long as the humans are cocky enough to act like they are the kings of their domain, the gods will cower and remain obedient (sometimes a more mischievous god will cause psychic or supernatural phenomena, but those are taken care of by special organizations).

It’s also not like all the gods get along with each other. It’s easy to understand if you compare them to a group of humans. Put many people with many distinct personalities together, and you will see love, hate, and factions forming. This gives rise to rivalries and even hierarchies of influence. After all, there are “Myriad” gods, so there’s no reason to expect all of them to be of one mind. In fact, the gods tried to push their own agendas at every given opportunity, and tried to craft a world that was personally most convenient for themselves.

But a god’s influence only extends to himself. The god of the pebble cannot change anything outside of himself, the pebble. And the other gods have their own senses of self, so of course they have no reason to do what he asks.

But there is still a hierarchy among the gods. For example, take a wooden desk. The desk is made from a collection of wood and screws. In that case, the desk, the wood, and the screws are all inhabited by gods. The god residing in the wood is in a sense the god of the wood, but in another sense is a part of the god of the desk. And then, the god of the desk is also part of the god of furniture (desks are a type of furniture, so you can consider desks as falling under the realm of “furniture”).

Like atoms and molecules, small gods can gather to form larger gods, becoming gods of more and more conceptual objects. For example, you can have the following progression: god of the desk -> god of the household -> god of the town -> god of the country -> god of the world. You could consider these gods that are lower in the chain to be nothing but a part of the gods they make up.

Consider, if you like, the relationship between individuals and organizations. Each and every member of the organization has their own sense of self, and are their own beings, but when you bring all those members together, you also give rise to the “corporate body,” which also has its own personality. And in most cases, the organization members cannot defy that corporate body. The corporate body has the right to give orders to its members, or you could even say that it has the power to force its members to obey. In the case of gods, this phenomenon becomes even more striking.

The bigger “collective gods” can force the smaller “constituent gods” to obey. It could be described as an absolute power of authority. The higher-up gods (said to possess “higher divinity,” or something like that) rule over the lower gods, and can change those lower gods as they please. These changes are called “alterations.”

I already mentioned this before, but because the gods have their own personalities, each god tries to change the world in a way that is convenient for himself. However, that does not mean that every god can just act how he wishes and throw the world into a state of lawless chaos.

If all the humans just acted as they pleased, then nations would fall.

Or rather, nations were made in the first place because humans were so against such a state of disorder. The gods are the same way. There is an existence that regulates all the gods so they do not go overboard in trying to satisfy their own desires. That existence is the King of the Gods, the “Supreme God Amaterasu.”

Just as the title of “Supreme God” would suggest, Amaterasu’s divinity ranks number one. All other gods submit to her. The world is defined however she wishes, and the other gods define their own forms based on that. Ultimately, the world changes itself to fit Amaterasu’s desires. From the pebble on the side of the road to the overarching physical laws.

For a while, a world convenient for the humans persisted, because Amaterasu had been captured by the humans and made to obey them. Humans occupied a bit of a unique position in the world, so they sealed the Supreme God, and used her as a tool for their benefit. They used her power and her authority to make and maintain the world in a state that was advantageous to them.

I will go into details later, but of all things, Amaterasu was now resting inside my brother’s body. Or rather, she had been assimilated into his body. You could even say that my brother *was* the Supreme God Amaterasu. This will probably make it easier to understand for a certain group of people, but my brother was Suzumiya Haruhi. But for various reasons, my brother was not aware of his divinity, and was just a blockhead who didn’t know how to use his powers. And like what happens when an incompetent king tries to rule over a country, the world was being thrown into disarray.

And well, that’s how things are now. How did things manage to get so screwed up?

That is a question that I should probably wait until the next report to answer. But more importantly, we have to think a bit about the big mess the other day: the event which we shall temporarily call the “Valentine’s Day Tragedy.”

*****In Regards to the “Valentine’s Day Tragedy.” *****

Since the Supreme God Amaterasu moved into my brother’s body, the first large-scale alteration we encountered was the “Valentine’s Day Tragedy.” After that screwed-up episode in which it seemed the whole world had gotten turned into chocolate, I did a lot of thinking and researching, and I finally believe I understand the essentials of what had happened.

You could say my brother was born to be a manservant, but he desired nothing for himself. You could say that various events made it impossible for him to be greedy, or that he had no sense of self, but my brother usually did not think or feel for himself. He always hid his face precisely because he wanted to “kill” his sense of self, or because he didn’t want to be aware that he existed.

So, even though he was endowed with the power of the Supreme God, my brother did not use that power for his own selfish desires. You could say that such power was wasted on him, but if he used the Supreme God’s power seriously, he could destroy the entire world... so you could also say that this was a nice and safe situation.

And that's precisely why I had let my guard down. I did make the Oniichan Surveillance Tool to check that my brother wasn't doing anything strange or developing any troublesome selfish desires, and I made sure I kept a close watch on him (otherwise, why would anybody watch that damn hentai around the clock?). But my brother just continued to live every day out completely normally, making it seem that even keeping watch over him was a bit pointless.

But this time, my brother developed a selfish desire. It might sound a bit ridiculous, but that selfish desire was his desire for chocolate... after he had been told too much by the Yagami sisters about Valentine's Day, he finally managed to *want* something.

Please don't misunderstand; it's not like my brother gave out the order that the whole world should turn to chocolate. *That was completely the action of the gods around him.* The gods heard my brother's wish for chocolate, and wanting to please the Supreme God, they changed their own forms into chocolate, urging him to "Please eat me, please eat me!" (Right now, my brother was completely equal to the Supreme God, and the other gods really couldn't tell the difference.)

Everyone wants to be employed by a good company, and live in a country where they could live a peaceful and fruitful life. The gods are the same. If the Supreme God takes a liking to a god, then that god's ranking increases. His divinity goes up. He will then be able to live a bit more freely, and to fulfill his own selfish desires more easily. So the gods tried their very best to fulfill my brother's desires. In short, they tried to flatter my brother in an attempt to get into his good graces.

As a result, the gods turned my body into chocolate and also turned the world on its head, transforming it into a bizarre chocolate wonderland. Everything was for my brother. Everything was to make my brother happy. My brother definitely got more chocolate on Valentine's Day than anybody else in the entire world.

In any case, the gods turned themselves into chocolate without thinking of the consequences, but the ones who took offense to this were the Yagami sisters. The Yagami sisters seemed to possess a divinity far exceeding that of normal gods, and what's more, they seemed to occupy a rather special position in the hierarchy, and were able to forcibly intervene in even the alterations that happened because of the Supreme God.

Those girls tried to return the world to its original state. That was natural. I understood why they would want to. If you asked me whether I wanted the entire world to be turned into chocolate, I think I would have to politely decline. But their actions were judged by the other gods to be clearly hostile and subversive to their attempts at making the Supreme God as happy as possible.

That's precisely why the gods which had turned into chocolate attacked the Yagami sisters when they tried to return the world to normal. That was the identity of that brown torrent which had swept violently through my house. (The Yagami sisters had called the hostile gods who attacked them "evil gods"... but I'm still not sure what they meant, so hopefully I'll have figured that out by the time I write the next report.)

Although, this time, a lowly god of substance had challenged the much more highly divine Yagami sisters and had been quickly reduced to dust (gods of substance are the lowest denomination of god, and were so-called “constituent gods.” Gods that inhabited animals and plants were of equally low denomination, but they were called “gods of living things” and were treated slightly differently). And after they had disposed of the small fry, the Yagami sisters proceeded to resolve this “irregularity” (this is what they called alterations that gave rise to situations that they didn’t like).

In summary, this entire incident occurred because my brother wanted chocolate. So the only way to resolve the issue was to satisfy that desire. That’s why the three Yagami sisters were so careful to coat me with chocolate, and offered me to my brother. I was a living sacrifice.

And when my brother saw me there, almost like I was offering myself to him as the chocolate he wanted, he got completely the wrong idea and died from satisfaction. So, given that my brother’s desires had been satisfied, the other gods sadly saw that altering things more would be pointless, so they all returned to their original forms (my brother also did want to live a normal life, so once his other desires were quelled the world would pretty much automatically return to normal).

*****Conclusion. *****

But seriously, to think that a large-scale alteration could come from as trivial a desire as “I want chocolate”... the Supreme God’s power was just ridiculous. I think I should strengthen my surveillance of my brother so something as insane as this doesn’t happen again.

There are still quite a few things that I have yet to understand, like the true identities of the three Yagami sisters. I will continue to investigate and think about these things so I can properly deal with them later. It's really stupid that I have to do all these annoying things... but well, I can't say that I didn't have anything to do with how the world got to such a messed-up state, so I guess I don't really have a choice...

Also, I don't think I want to eat chocolate for a while.

END PART 1

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI¹

Chapter 8: Real World Problems

“I’m so bored...”

Classes were in session at Konohana Sakuya Academy, and in the classroom belonging to the right-hand-side first-year students, Tsurugi let out a child-like yawn.

And then, completely nonchalantly...

“Tsukuyomi, take your clothes off.”

She said something ridiculous to my brother, who was sitting with unusually correct posture in front of her.

“I’m really not sure why you’re asking that...”

My brother seemed happy just to be able to talk with Tsurugi, and was almost trembling with excitement.

“But I think taking off my clothes in the classroom would get me arrested.”

¹ Yamata no Orochi is an eight-headed serpent from Japanese mythology.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

“Get arrested then. I want to see you, scorned by the students, abandoned by your coworkers, getting lectured at a police station... and then I’ll go on a variety show and be in tears as I tell them: ‘Oh, he always used to be a bit strange... but to think he would do such a thing...’ wha, whoops, that was close.”

Just to let you know, Tsurugi and my brother were playing Jenga in front of the class, completely ignoring the students.

Tsurugi clumsily reached her hand out, and nervously slid a piece out.

The Jenga tower was already completely filled with holes and began to sway from left to right, but it just barely managed to stay standing.

“Alright! It didn’t fall! Don’t forget that there’ll be a penalty game if you lose! You were foolish to challenge me, and I’ll make sure you understand that when I crush your spirit!”

“That was quite a nice move...”

My brother lifted himself slightly from his folding chair, reached out and easily pulled another piece out. The Jenga tower didn’t even budge.

“Uwah?! What the hell?! How the hell did you do that so easily?!”

“I’ve been pretty handy since I was young. I’m pretty good at these kinds of small games that test dexterity.”

“Ugh, aren’t you cocky today, Tsukuyomi?! I thought you were the kind of character who fails at everything and ends up running to me in tears going ‘Uwaaah, Tsurugi-sensei! Help me please!!’”

“I don’t really remember ever behaving like N*nta-kun...”²

“Ooooooooo...”

Tsurugi groaned, and looked like she was having a really hard time picking which piece to try and pull out next.

She tried to pull a piece for a bit, but it seemed like it wouldn’t work, so she began to sway from side to side with tears in her eyes.

“But anyways, is it really alright for us to have so little to do like this...?”

My brother glanced at the students in the classroom.

² Reference to Nobita-kun from Doraemon. Credits to jorgelotr for catching this reference.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Due to declining birthrates, Konohana Sakuya Academy didn't have many students, and there were only three classes in the first year. They were called the "right-hand-side class," the "left-hand-side class," and the "center class."

Despite that, the government pointlessly poured tax dollars into education-related things, leading to an excess of teachers.

Mid-morning was for "practical" classes, and were taught by teachers who were specialists in their fields. But the morning, the afternoon, and the last homeroom were dedicated to "fundamental learning," and were taught by each class's homeroom teacher and assistant homeroom teacher.

On paper, the assistant homeroom teacher was supposed to support the homeroom teacher, but my brother had all the work pushed on him by Tsurugi, so he actually ended up with more responsibilities.

"Leaving aside the morning classes when you actually have to have specialized knowledge, there just isn't anything difficult in the afternoon."

Tsurugi said that while very, very slowly trying to pull out one of the pieces.

"Also, the old custom of the teacher teaching the students anything and everything is wrong. If they don't have the motivation, they're not going to get anywhere. The students themselves have to want to learn for there to be a point.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

The traditional educational system was just mass producing idiots, so an educational revolution happened, and schools as we know it were changed from their very cores.”

She behaved like a child, but she had the weary atmosphere of an old woman about her.

“School isn’t some sort of amusement park. There’s no need for us teachers to think that we have to get the students to have fun, and there’s really no value in that either. It really doesn’t do anything for the students. You try to give them knowledge in everything far and wide, but even if you force them to memorize things, all you’ll end up doing is mass produce students who ‘seem smart.’”

Tsurugi didn’t really seem annoyed. She just continued talking nonchalantly.

“They can solve problems from textbooks, but they can’t think for themselves, they can’t apply what they’ve learned, and they can’t make their own judgments. You just end up churning out wave after wave of lazy, directionless kids. But the teachers from the past just looked away and tried to smooth it all over on the surface. What incompetence.”

Tsurugi clicked her tongue, and sat cross-legged on top of her folding chair.

“School became pointless, education became meaningless, and schools became just like prisons, places where you just waited for time to pass.

The modern schooling system is the result of people thinking about how to at least make that ‘prison term’ not go to waste.”

Taking a glance around, one could see the students slowly absorbing a “fundamental learning” textbook.

“Fundamental learning” was a time when the students strengthened the areas that formed the foundation of all varieties of scholarship... areas like Japanese language, mathematics, or physical fitness. Students who used up all their concentration during the morning would sleep through most of their classes in the afternoon (and it seemed that there really were a lot of students like that), so the afternoon classes would be put to waste.

And so, the solution was to have afternoon classes consist of simple work that wouldn’t use up too much brainpower.

If they wanted to improve their Japanese, then they could work on transcribing kanji or writing out sentences. Or they could read, or edit other people’s writing.

They didn’t have to read serious works of literature, or memorize random grammatical rules.

No, the best way to hone your Japanese ability was just to write some text, and feel your hands moving as they produced the words.

Students who want to study something more in depth are allowed to choose a topic and pursue it vigorously during the morning “practical” classes.

“Well, when we were young, classes were just times for sleep. When the teacher asked questions, we would just find ways to deal with it, and we would get through exams by just cramming at the last minute. And we did really well like that. But I can’t help thinking though that wasting our precious childhoods like that wasn’t great, and we should have spent more time working hard and learning real skills...”

Maybe it’s because Tsurugi was trying to do something that took a lot of concentration while she was talking, but her fingertips shook and the entire Jenga tower came quickly crashing down.

“Ah, crap!”

Tsurugi held her head in frustration, and my brother did a little dance.

“Hooray, I won! Now Tsurugi-sensei is the one who has to make the lesson plan for tomorrow! That was the deal!”

“Shut up! Moron! Don’t get so proud of yourself! I lost this game, but I definitely win in the game of life, you moron! Also, what kind of grownup gets all worked up over winning a game?! Moron! Idiot!”

And right when Tsurugi began raising a fuss...

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“Funyaa.”

-

Kagami, who had been boldly sleeping, sprawled out on her desk in the front row, gently raised her head.

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“Sensei, neesan, you’re being noisy. Please shut up.”

Kagami had on her usual vacant expression that made it very difficult to guess what she was thinking.

“We are in the middle of class. Aren’t you ashamed as teachers when you act so disrespectfully like that? As a student, and as your little sister, I don’t think I can face society anymore after seeing that.”

“For some reason, it feels weird getting told that by someone who was completely asleep up until a second ago...”

Tsurugi watched her ghostly³ sister with irritated eyes.

³ Literally, she had “no sense of presence.”

“Funyaa.”

Giving our her usual meow (I guess you could call it a meow?), Kagami showed us the thick book of arithmetic exercises she had been using as a pillow.

“More importantly, neesan. I don’t have anybody to check answers with today.”

It would be pretty annoying for the teacher to have to check answers on all the arithmetic exercises and things like that, so usually the students checked answers with the people sitting next to them.

But just as Kagami said, the seat next to hers was empty.

“Actually, there sure are a lot of empty seats today...”

My brother looked around the classroom.

It wasn’t enough to force a school closure, but one out of every four students was missing.

Kagami gave off a rather astounded sigh.

“Lately it’s always been like this.”

“Oh really?”

“You should pay more attention to these things. Remember, you’re still a teacher.”

“I don’t think students know exactly how uninterested teachers are in them.”

“I really didn’t want to know the existence of such a bleak reality.”

“Ugh, dammit! I’m getting pissed just listening to you two! Just get on with it already!”

It seemed a fire had struck within Tsurugi as she listened to my brother and Kagami’s relaxed conversation.

“It’s weird, isn’t it?! It’s clearly weird! It’s not like spring started today or something, so why are so many people missing?! If they don’t meet their fundamental learning quota, they’ll be mercilessly held back a grade, so the students really should be trying to make it to school as much as possible...!”

Tsurugi’s white coat swayed from side to side, she jumped onto her chair, and surveyed the classroom.

“Is there some strange disease going around...? Or is this some kind of special alteration...?”

“It’s probably not a disease.”

Kagami muttered and took out her laptop from her bag.

“The cause of all of this can probably be found within this.”

As long as they didn’t bother their neighbors, students were allowed to listen to music with headphones or watch movies during fundamental learning time, so there were quite a few students who were fiddling with their laptops or cell phones.

In fact, the reason more people didn’t complain when my brother and Tsurugi were making so much noise was because they were busy listening to music while doing their arithmetic drills, and weren’t really paying attention to what was happening around them.

“Please look here.”

Kagami turned her computer towards my brother and Tsurugi, pointing to the screen.

And on that screen was...

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The Reverse Side of the First-Year Right-Hand-Side Class

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Those words were written in ominous-looking, dark-brown gothic font.

Right next to those words was a small area, and inside that area you could see a miniature classroom.

Inside that classroom were muscular giants randomly wearing armor, pretty girls with pointed ears, completely mysterious creatures that had many tentacles sprouting from their bodies... and they were exchanging jumbled up messages. “I wish class would end sooner!” “Seriously, is fundamental learning really useful? Will it actually help me in the real world?” “Ahh, Tsurugi-chan lost. She’s so cute when she’s angry~~”

The words were displayed on screen in speech bubbles, like you would see in manga, and there were also conversations here and there that weren’t publically visible, which were displayed with the message “This message can only be read by friends.”

“...What’s this? A game?”

Tsurugi liked games, so she seemed pretty interested in this, but Kagami shook her head in denial.

“This program is called ‘Yamata no Orochi SNS.’ It’s incredibly popular right now with younger people.”

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Kagami looked pretty proud of herself.

“A social networking service... it’s a virtual society created on the internet, where you can find friends, chat, and engage in various other social activities. Yamata no Orochi SNS comes with a lot of functions and is quite sophisticated, to the point where you really can feel like you are living in a virtual society, so it’s become very famous. There’s an estimated three hundred thousand users online, including the current Prime Minister and many famous actors, so it is incredibly popular everywhere.”

Kagami remained mostly expressionless as she gave her sister a suspicious stare.

“But neesan, did you really not know about this? It’s quite famous, you know?”

“I use my computer to play games, so this type of communication-based stuff is a bit... but also, what is all this over here?”

Tsurugi scowled, but Kagami didn’t move a single eyebrow.

“To put it simply...”

Kagami pointed to the little group of people on screen who were exchanging secret messages and quickly continued.

“This person and this person and this person are students who didn’t come to school today. They use fake names on here so I don’t know what their real names are, but for someone like me it would be easy to find out that information. These people are on Yamata no Orochi SNS from day to night, even forgetting to do common sense things like going to school... or rather, they choose to ignore such things in order to play on the internet.”

“If that’s true, then as a teacher I really can’t overlook that...”

Tsurugi stared at the computer screen with distrust.

“Is this Yamata no Orochi SNS thing really that fun? Sure, school hasn’t been that interesting lately, but if you don’t go and graduate, no company will want to hire you... is this thing really so addictive that it would get people to go so far as to ruin their lives?”

“Who knows...”

Kagami seemed pretty drowsy.

“I don’t have the ability to judge whether something is ‘fun’ or ‘interesting.’”

“Yeah, that’s true.”

Tsurugi sighed, and her face suddenly became a bit serious.

“So, can anybody use this Yamata no Orochi SNS service? How about I go and try it out a bit and see what it’s about?”

“Neesan, to think you would be interested in this...”

Even Kagami became a bit quiet.

“...Is this the work of an alteration?”

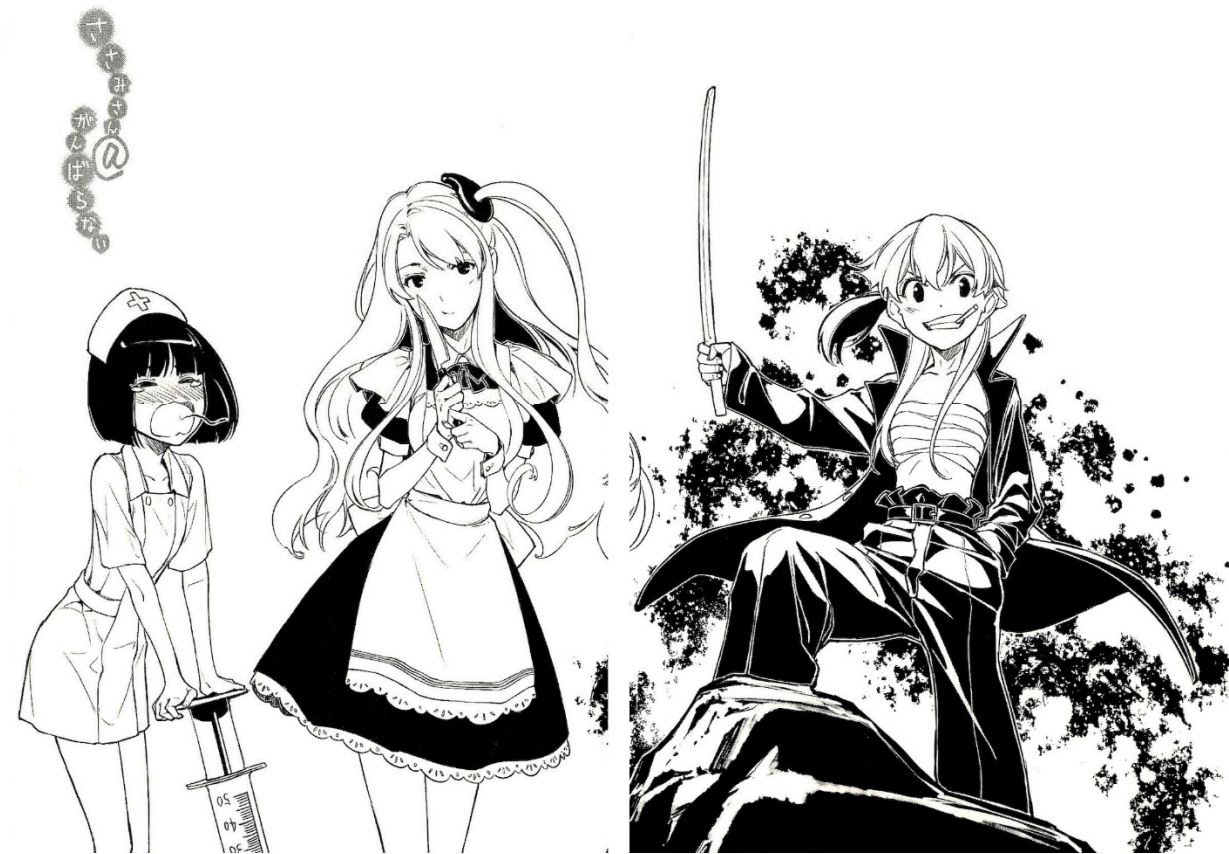
“Who knows? But if we don’t stamp out every suspicious thing from one end to the next now, there’ll be nothing we can do once it’s too late. But if there’s really three hundred thousand people using this... if it’s an alteration, that would be a pretty big-scale alteration, so we can’t be careless about this. I’ll get Tama to join us, and the three Yagami sisters will combine their forces to deal with this.”

And then Tsurugi turned to my brother, who had been closely following the conversation.

“Hey, Tsukuyomi? If I remember right, your little sister has a lot of computers, yeah...?”

“Eh? Ahh, yes. I think she has around ten... why do you ask?”

“Lend us a few computers... or no, you and your little sister should help us out too. If this really is an alteration, you two are definitely the cause of it all, so you’re going to be sticking with us until everything is nice and settled... ufufufu.”



Chapter 9: Job Hunting

“So let us use a few of your computers.”

“.....”

I didn't know whether they were aware or not of my spying on my brother all this time... but in either case, Tsurugi unceremoniously threw my doors open and came into my room without any prior warning, with a huge smile on her face.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

I had been told to expect company, so I changed out of my pajamas and cleaned up my room a bit... but they had gotten here way faster than I had expected...

I dwelled on that for a moment, but decided to go with the tactful, polite approach. “Good afternoon, sensei. Umm, could I please ask what you came here for today?”

“Wow, this room is really huge!”

“Last time we were here, the room was completely covered in chocolate, and even after it returned to normal we were kicked out before we could take a good look... but I see, this room certainly has quite a bit of space for a private room.”

Both Tama with her red backpack and Kagami with her uniform and school bag rudely stepped into my room.

They sure seemed like they were pretty excited as they looked all around the place.

“You have so many stuffed animalllls~~”

“Hm... this is... quite...”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Kagami hugged the only friends I had in the world (stuffed animals) to her so tight that I thought she might crush them and jumped onto my bed, pulling the futon covers over herself. Don't sleep, dammit.

These people sure just did what they wanted...

Tsurugi grimaced at the sight of her sisters and then asked me in a low voice.

"Well, we won't dwell on how you've been absent from school so much... so in return, help us out."

"You're blackmailing me, even though you're a teacher...?"

"It's a negotiation, Tsukuyomi Sasami. It's also not inconvenient for you and your brother to make allies of us. I just want us all to get along."

Well, whatever.

They didn't seem to have any bad intentions for now... and at any rate, it's not like I could force them out with my own power.

So maybe it would be better here for me to just make nice with them and use that to my advantage later.

“Well, fine then. But it’d be a bother if you stayed here forever, so let’s finish this quick, alright?”

“Got it.”

Tsurugi gave me a carefree laugh.

“We’re not here to enjoy this ‘Yamata no Orochi SNS,’ but to investigate it and resolve any evil ‘irregularities’ we find within. If there’s something suspicious in this game we’ll find it quick enough, and if the ‘enemy’ isn’t a complete idiot, he’ll come at us the minute he realizes we’re there... so it shouldn’t take that much time.”

“Enemy, you say... do you already know what kind of suspicious activity in ‘Yamata no Orochi SNS’ (?) you’re looking for? Also are you sure there’s some ‘irregularity’ (?) going on here?”

“We’ll be finding that out shortly.”

Also, from her tone, it sure sounded like Tsurugi was aware that I was spying on them... I guess playing dumb was a bit...

“Alright, just wait a second.”

Just as Tsurugi asked, I got a few laptops I didn't really care about and set them on the floor. I plugged them in and turned them on. I also placed a few cushions on the floor, and like that the preparations were complete.

I returned to the middle of the room.

From this position, I could see the screens on all the laptops.

I'll have to watch them from here to make sure they don't try anything suspicious...

"Alright, my sisters. Come over. Tama, stop touching things that aren't yours. Kagami, stop sleeping. Even I'm behaving myself here, so don't embarrass your sister!"

While she said that, Tsurugi went over to the red futon cover and knocked her little sisters on their heads.

Not being able to do whatever they wanted anymore, Tama and Kagami reluctantly moved over and sat in front of the computers.

I had already set up the computers so that all they had to do was push the power button.

However...

“It’s fine and all that you all have laptops now, but this house only has one Internet line... Yamata no Orochi SNS is a mix between an online game and a social networking service, right? We’ll have to set up a line for each person...”

“Don’t worry. I’ll use an alteration and do something about that.”

Tsurugi said that like it was nothing, and I was shocked.

“If you’re going to tamper with things and make things convenient for yourself like that, you could have just found your own laptops while you were at it...”

“We’re not all-powerful, you know... and using an alteration is also pretty tiring. I also don’t know what’s going to happen, so I try to use them as little as possible.”

Tsurugi gave a huge stretch and yawned like a cat.

“Also, if Yamata no Orochi SNS is an irregularity, it’s one on a huge scale that’s sucked in a lot of people, so that’s something that’s bothering me a little. This may not be an ‘evil god’ who can exercise influence even without the help of humans or ‘foreign enemies’ with no business being in this land. Rather, our opponent might be a ‘human calamity.’”

She also seemed to have no intention of hiding the fact that she wasn't human.

"And if we're dealing with a 'human calamity,' then it's possible than even we would get our feet swept from under us... they're a bit of a special breed... so having Tsukuyomi here with the power of the Supreme God would be a great help, and actually, you might be the most fit to deal with this out of any of us... Sasami."

"Me?"

But I was just a hikikomori without any real talents...

While I stood there in confusion, my brother (who hadn't shown himself yet) came in carrying a tray filled with snacks and plastic bottles with both hands.

It seemed that he had made all the necessary arrangements to entertain our guests.

"Oh, nice work. Set those down over there."

Tsurugi ordered my brother around with more arrogance than she would have if she were the head of the house.

Maybe my brother was happy at getting ordered around by this midget teacher, but he was almost trembling as he obeyed Tsurugi's commands.

My brother sure was acting as servile as usual...

Astounded by what was happening, I leaned back deeply into my computer chair.

Well then, what should I do here...?

“Howawawa...”

Tama seemed troubled as she sat in front of the computer and some weird noises came out of her mouth.

“What should Tama do? What should Tama do?”

“Funyaa. For now, you can just do what me and oneesan are doing.”

The computer beginner Tama sat between her two sisters; Tsurugi was on her right and Kagami was on her left.

Also, my brother was sitting on Tsurugi’s right.

The four of them sat in a line on the floor and turned on their computers on almost the same time.

The whirl of their machines filled the air, and I could feel the characteristic crackle of electricity in the air as well.

“Huh?”

Tama was looking with excitement at her computer screen as the display filled with color, but then she looked at me as I sat off by myself and cocked her head to the side.

“Sasami-oneechan isn’t going to play Yamata no Orochi SNS?”

“I’ll pass...”

I acted like I wasn’t interested, turned on my own computer, and browsed pointlessly through a random mail order site.

“It’s annoying... and I’ve never even written a blog entry, let alone owned a blog. I’ve also never used a forum, so I have no idea why people find these SNS things so fun.”

“Are you even a hikikomori online...?”

Tsurugi mumbled in amazement and sighed.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

“Well, it would be pointless to force you... and I’m grateful just to be able to use our computers. Tsukuyomi, you’ll help us, right?”

“Hmm... well, if the students are so obsessed with this Yamata no Orochi SNS that they’re not even coming to school, that certainly is a problem, so I suppose I should at least take a look...”

My brother sounded like he had just remembered that he was a teacher.

Still keeping an eye on those four, I looked back at my own computer screen.

From where those four were sitting, they probably couldn’t see what I was doing.

I put on my headphones and clicked an icon on my desktop.

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And Yamata no Orochi SNS booted up.

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I couldn’t say it...

I couldn’t tell them that I was already completely obsessed with Yamata no Orochi SNS and had already used my hikikomori status to my advantage to log thousands of hours on that game...

On the screen was displayed my almost foreign-looking character name, “Sasamisan.”¹ She was completely decked out in rare items and was being gazed at with looks of respect from all the other Yamata no Orochi SNS players.

I would have never expected that the Yagami Sisters would set their eyes on Yamata no Orochi SNS...

“.....”

I gloomily began to move around my character on screen.

If the Yagami Sisters judged Yamata no Orochi SNS to be an irregularity and decided to destroy it... I would have to do everything in my power to stop them.

At the very least, I had to make sure that they didn’t erase the very existence of Yamata no Orochi SNS... after all, I just didn’t even want to think of the possibility that the character I had spent so much time working on, all these items I had gathered, and the story that had been unveiled so far would all go to waste...

Depending on what happened, there was a chance that the Yagami Sisters and I would find ourselves on the opposite sides of a battlefield.

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¹ Sasami-san is written completely in katakana, which gives it a foreign-ey feel.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

While everyone registered their characters for Yamata no Orochi SNS and downloaded all the necessary files, Kagami read the “School Entrance Guide” for Yamata no Orochi SNS that she had printed out using my printer a while ago.

Yamata no Orochi SNS was a mix of a sword and magic fantasy game and a school life game, so it came with a “School Entrance Guide,” not a guidebook.

Well, sadly, this was an online game, so once you got past a certain level of play, you would either need to go buy the huge, thick guidebook that was available or would need to spend hours and hours on end researching information online.

I could also offer advice, but for now I just decided to watch.

After all, the minute these three got involved, I was pretty sure that things wouldn’t proceed normally...

“Yamata no Orochi SNS appears to be an SNS that has quite a history, and has existed since the days when the World Wide Web was integrated into society and when everyone became used to working in an online environment.”

Kagami was referencing the “School Entrance Guide.”

“It seems the game was made carefully by a small company, and was not very popular... it’s a cross between an online game and an SNS, but people have complained that neither aspect is very good, and it wasn’t too well received because of that.”

“So it’s like an eroge with a lot of gameplay.”

Tsurugi nodded, seeming convinced.

“It’s like when the gameplay part of an eroge is too hard, and you can’t beat it and get to the H-scenes, and then the game itself isn’t even that fun! Even though I bought the game to watch the H-scenes! But just reading text on and on and on gets boring too...”

“Please stop turning every conversation into a conversation about eroge.”

Kagami spat that out and looked at her sister like she was looking at something filthy.

“At any rate, this Yamata no Orochi SNS also began to realize its potential as the Internet and technology improved, the number of users increased, and lately it’s just exploded in popularity. But it seems a bit unnatural... in such a cruel consumer society like this one, it’s hard to believe that there would be people who would be so patient as to wait for this game to grow. So how has the company that produced this game managed to keep from going bankrupt all this time?”

“You’re saying that maybe some peculiar alteration has kept it from going bankrupt?”

Tsurugi mumbled with a serious look on her face.

“Or they didn’t care about profit. They might not have been in it for the money. Even if nobody saw what they were doing, even if they didn’t earn a single penny... there were still a lot of people keeping the homepage up and writing the blog. Humans are creatures that want themselves to be known, and will spin tales even if those tales do not lead to profits.”

The midget teacher smiled but for some reason looked a bit jealous.

“They say that anyone and everyone can write at least one book. Everyone wants the story of their own life to be seen by others. They want to be immortalized. And to not disappear like steam vanishing into the air. I understand how they feel. Even the gods live on in their own legends. And great men live on in history books. But even normal people can live on through stories.”

On the Internet, countless homepages and blogs and other things exist here and there in their own little world and form their own little private gardens.

Even if nobody asked for it... even if nobody was profiting from it...

Humans were creatures who wanted to create stories and leave those stories behind.

“The countless words spun into stories, the countless photos that seem to cut away a piece from reality, the many drawings and musical pieces that spring from people’s imaginations... there is a vast quantity of stories swirling around the Internet. But in most cases... those stories are left unseen and just collect like sand on the beach.”

Tsurugi looked off into the distance.

“Where do these forgotten stories end up? Even if there’s no point, even if there’s no profit, why do humans continue to create stories? What could be their goal in just crafting these ‘human legends’ with themselves at the center and letting them pile up?”

I had no idea what Tsurugi was talking about, but after she was done with her monologue, she put on a complicated look.

“But no matter what, the present state of this world was built out of the Schrödinger’s box of human fantasy, so divine existences who accumulate human desire grow stronger. No matter how small and weak the god was to begin with, if they gather enough followers, their sphere of influence widens, and their ability to impact the world grows. And there are three hundred thousand people using Yamata no Orochi SNS... so that could become a bit of a problem.”

“I’m not too sure what you’re talking about, but...”

Kagami mumbled, sounding concerned.

“Umm... if a god allies himself with a lot of humans, he can take their life energy and power up... is that what you’re saying? So the god who is in control of Yamata no Orochi SNS is becoming absurdly strong because of that...?”

“Well, you could say it like that. I guess it’s a bit similar to the image of a demon sucking out the life force of its victims. But even if you don’t understand it completely, we can still deal with these phenomena that are cropping up. And also, no matter how strong he gets... he’s still no match for us three sisters.”

Tsurugi didn’t seem worried at all as she muttered, and she gripped the game controller for the computer.

You could play Yamata no Orochi SNS with only a keyboard and mouse, but Tsurugi insisted that it would be hard to play without a controller, so I lent her one.

“Well, let’s just try to enjoy ourselves then. This guy was stupid enough to lay a hand on the students, so let’s make him regret it... so this is like an RPG, right? We make a character, have an adventure, and we level up...”

“Funyaa. You could do those things, but that’s not the point. It’s still an SNS at the heart of it. There’s a story, and many events happen following that story, and the primary goal is to communicate with other people in the game in accordance to those events.”

Kagami casually looked at the “School Entrance Guide” and explained.

“It’s possible to focus on the game side of things if you want to, but you’re left relatively free to do what you want, whether you want to play minigames, make a community, or even just make a blog. So you could call it an ‘SNS with a heavy game element.’”

Kagami spoke irritatingly slowly, almost as if she was a slow reader (even though she gave off the impression that she was always reading), or as if she had trouble understanding things after thinking about them.

“We’ll make a character, and first we will enroll into one of the many schools in Yamata no Orohi SNS. And then we’ll control that character for three years and live out our school life.”

“For three years?”

Kagami showed no visible reaction at Tsurugi’s question.

“It’s not real time, but the time system in the game. If we were to put it in terms of real time... well, one year of game time translates roughly to one month of real time. Once you go through three years of game time, your character ‘graduates’ and you make and enroll a new character who inherits all the items and money of the old character... and this pattern repeats itself endlessly.”

“Do you get anything special for ‘graduating’?”

“Yes. New game functions are unlocked. New ways to customize your character’s appearance and species become available, and you also unlock new events. You also inherit your blogs and communities, as well as the ‘companions’ that are similar to what are called ‘friends’ in other SNS programs. The more you play, the more items and money you accumulate, and you will eventually be able to play to your heart’s content, however you wish. The graduation mechanism also keeps the game from growing too stale.”

Exactly.

I had already graduated dozens of characters.

The graduated characters become NPCs, and there were cases where they became shopkeepers or teachers in the game. Sometimes I would come across one of those characters accidentally and that was always a happy experience... and sometimes something happens and those characters turn into monsters and attack, but that was also interesting in its own way.

“Also, the characters who earn superb grades in those three years don’t graduate, but are rather sent to a special stage called “Valhalla,” where they engage in a grand and endless survivor game. You can find high-experience monsters there and other players who were sent to Valhalla, and you can battle on as long as you want. Well, this part of the game is more aimed towards players who love games and want a high-leveled adventure...”

“But I don’t think we’ll be getting into it that deep.”

Tsurugi's eyes sparkled, almost as if she was pretty excited.

"Oh, looks like the download finished. So we can start now, right?"

"It seems so. Has everyone's download finished?"

Tama and my brother both nodded. Those two really didn't seem like they were very good at games...

Anyhow, the four sitting in front of me simultaneously clicked the Yamata no Orochi SNS icon... an icon that was shaped like an eight-headed dragon, just as the name would suggest.

@@@@@

A beautiful opening movie played.

The movie showed one planet.

It was a blue, beautiful planet, surrounded by five moons.

The seas were dotted with reds and purples, and scattered amongst those seas were a number of continents and islands.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

It was a fantasy world, filled with dragons whooshing through the air and giants striding across the land.

And as the image on the screen seemed to fly around this world, captions suddenly began to appear across the screen.

-

Once upon a time, the gods were frustrated.

The gods had played with the world however they wished.

But in the end, their actions had thrown the world into a horrifying state of chaos.

"Let's do it over."

"This was a failure."

And so, the gods that had come to that conclusion came together.

First, to restore peace to the world, they gathered before the Yamata no Orochi, the destroyer of everything.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

And that monster, each of its eight heads a symbol of destruction, began to mercilessly rampage through the world.

But there was one thing the gods had not predicted.

The countless beings living in this failed world.

They discovered the gods' intentions and began a fierce resistance.

"We are not failures," they declared.

With courage and conviction, the world's inhabitants unified into one.

And in the end, after waging a violent war against the demon god of destruction, Yamata no Orochi, they sealed the monster and brought a brief period of peace back to the land.

But Yamata no Orochi was by no means destroyed.

So in preparation for the next time that demon god would revive and bring the world to the brink of ruin...

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Places of learning were erected in various locations, and young people with bright futures gathered there.

They were tasked with protecting the world... and were called “Guardians.”

At the same time, those who had lived sinful lives full of hedonism and indulgence during the chaotic age...

They reformed themselves and swore to live honest, upright lives.

So that the gods would never again judge the world to be a “failure.”

And so, brimming with hopes and dreams for the future, you will enroll.

Enroll into one of these schools erected for self-discipline and the protection of the world.

If you want, spend your days having fun and seeking pleasure.

But do not forget.

Because of that shameful laziness and crude way of life.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

We have already once been abandoned by the gods.

In order to protect the world, or rather, in order to gain the trust of the gods...

Young ones, share in the fruits of youth, but also cultivate yourselves through diligence.

-

In the end, the screen zoomed in on the center of a huge continent, and you could see a strange city filled with brick buildings and large mechanical-looking towers with gears everywhere.

The screen zoomed in on the most conspicuous building in town; a white-walled palace with a grand World Tree sprouting from its ceiling. The huge doors to that palace opened.

The gate guard stepped out of the way, and the camera proceeded along a red carpet into a lobby filled with light.

A small, artistically-designed room appeared at the end of that lobby, and a bespectacled elf smiled into the camera from the other side of a table filled with scrolls and parchment.

Makina: New students, welcome to the Academy Management Building.

“Ohh, it talked.”

Tsurugi seemed surprised when a nasally voice belonging to a famous seiyuu² came from the screen in synch with the text that appeared.

This Makina-san acted as a guide for the new students and also showed up in quite a few events. She was a really popular character (although, because she wore loose clothing, there was a pointless argument in the fandom now and in doujinshi³ about whether she had small breasts or was hiding big ones).

Makina explained what Kagami had been saying a minute ago in simple terms, and then passed over a single document.

Makina: First, please choose the academy you would like to enroll in.

The document suddenly jumped up and filled the entire screen.

Makina: This seems to be the first time you’re playing Yamata no Orochi SNS, so please choose from the three academies aimed towards beginners. If you like games, I recommend choosing Olympus Academy. For those who want to make friends, I recommend Jerusalem Academy. And for those greedy ones who want to enjoy both, my suggestion is to enroll in Takamagahara Academy.

“Greek mythology, Christianity, and Japanese mythology, huh...?”

² Voice actress. For various personal and cultural reasons, I have conventionally kept this word untranslated.

³ Amateur-published manga, often parodying official works.

Tsurugi mumbled to herself.

“We want to work together, so let’s pick the same school. Is everyone okay with Takamagahara Academy? It seems like a safe choice and I’m pretty okay with Japanese mythology too.”

“I don’t mind.”

My brother just went with the flow and picked the Takamagahara Academy option that was displayed on the screen.

Everyone else did the same.

Makina nodded, seeming fully satisfied, and passed over the next document.

Makina: Understood. Well then... next, won’t you tell me a bit more about yourself? Please fill in the requested information here.

The screen changed completely.

On a parchment-colored background, a number of items were displayed.

Most of the items still showed blank space.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Tsurugi nodded, seeming to know what was going on.

“We have to make our characters. You use this menu to make the character that you will control when playing Yamata no Orochi SNS.

This type of system exists in normal games too... hmm... you put in your name and sex, your species and occupation...”

“Funyaa.”

Kagami showed no fear and proceeded to click here and there.

“You have a lot of freedom to choose your appearance for a game that takes place in a school... you can have a beard, you can be bald... and even though you’re a student you have to pick an ‘occupation’...”

“Well, try not to be bothered by the small details. Let’s see... looks like there are only three species you can pick from. Human, elf, and demon...”

“If you ‘graduate,’ there will be other options depending on how well you do in school, it seems. Elves are weaker than humans but are smarter and specialize in magic. Demons have the same abilities as humans, but they have some kind of back-story of infiltrating and trying to take over the school to help the demon king’s plans of world domination. They seem to have a lot more special events.”

“Hmm.”

Tsurugi sprawled herself down sloppily onto the floor.

“Let’s not make the characters look too confusing, so let’s base them off how we look in real life. Oh, it looks like you can take a photo of yourself and the game will automatically make a character that looks like you... hey Sasami, camera please.”

“Yeah yeah.”

I was called, so I prepared a camera that could connect to the computers.

Everyone’s photos were taken, and those photos were sent over to everyone’s computers.

And everyone’s characters were made using those photos as references.

After a bit, the gorgeous graphics of the game created characters that looked just like the real life people and those characters were displayed on screen (although, all the characters were wearing similar Middle-Ages European-style clothing).

“Ohh, amazing. It’s like I’m inside the screen.”

Tsurugi looked happy.

“Although to be honest, I really would have liked it better if they made me into a beautiful, sexy woman!”

“Seeing neesan like that would be depressing, so please stop.”

“Tama thinks smaller is better too.”

Tama let out a lonely-sounding mumble as she listened to her sisters’ conversation.

“Umm, you know, Tama, you know, she’s big. Tama always has to sit in the back, and even if she eats the same as everyone else she gets hungry again so fast. Tama wishes she was just as short as everyone else.”

“What a first world problem...”

Tsurugi grumbled and began to type away at the keyboard.

“Let’s make the names the same as our real names too. It’ll be easier to tell everyone apart that way. So I’m Tsu. Ru. Gi. Alright.”

“Then I’ll be ‘Kamiomi.’”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

“I’ve always thought this, but your name is really hard to pronounce... Tsukuyomi Kamiomi... there are way too many ‘mi’s in there! I almost bite my tongue every time I say your name!”

“Even if you say that... Kagami-san’s name is also pretty difficult, isn’t it? Yagami Kagami... it sounds almost like a tongue twister.”

“That’s none of your concern.”

“Hmph! That’s not fair! Tama also wants to have a hard name like everyone else!”

Tama seemed jealous for some inexplicable reason.

In the midst of all this random chatting, Tsurugi quickly finished making her character.

“Alright, done!”

“That was quick!”

Kagami seemed surprised and looked at her sister’s screen.

“What kind of character did you make?”

Tsurugi's character had the following stats:

Name: Tsurugi // Species: Human // Gender: Female // Age: 16

"..... Sixteen?"

"I couldn't write in any other age except for 16!"

Yamata no Orochi SNS was set in a high school, so it seemed that when everyone enrolled their age was sixteen.

There were also fields for "hometown," "future goals," "hobbies," and "special skills," but those weren't really important so whatever.

There were probably more than thousands of "occupations" you could choose from.

What you chose there would determine what you could do in the game and also would put limitations on what equipment and things like that you could equip. There were also secret occupations and upper-class occupations you could change to after you gained enough experience... even I didn't know what all the occupations were.

"I'm the kind of person who wants to just get through this stuff quickly, so I went with a warrior-type occupation. Here, look, I'm a 'Greatswordman.' Don't I look strong?"

“A lot of power in a small body, as they say?”

Kagami seemed impressed, as Makina smiled and took Tsurugi’s document from her.

Makina: Great, everything seems in order... oh?

Makina frowned and looked closely at the document

Makina: Tsurugi-san, this just won’t do. You shouldn’t lie on your paperwork!

“Eh?! Problem in the paperwork?! Crap, maybe I really shouldn’t have put sixteen in the age column?! But what’s so wrong with lying about your age on an online game, and taking back your youth...?!”

“No, wait. This is...”

As Tsurugi was completely confused, Kagami cocked her head to the side while looking at the “School Entrance Guide.”

Makina: Your real occupation is this one, isn’t it?

As she spoke, Makina put a red X through the document and overwrote Tsurugi's occupation.

The "Greatswordman" that was in the occupation column cleanly vanished, and in its place...

"How lucky, neesan. If you get that message when you're enrolling, it means you received one of the very rare occupations. These occupations work at least three times as well as the normal occupations. This is a good sign."

"Eh, no way. There's stuff like that too?"

Tsurugi suddenly cheered straight up and turned her gaze towards the screen.

"What kind of occupation is it, I wonder...?"

Tsurugi's eyes were filled with excitement, but she suddenly stiffened.

-

Makina: Tsurugi-san's occupation is not "Greatswordman," but "Banchou," isn't it?⁴

-

"Banchou?! What the hell?! I'm a teacher in real life! Also, how is banchou even an occupation?!"

⁴ Banchou is like... a high school gang leader. The head of a group of delinquents. It's not exactly gang leader though, and I don't think there's a very good English equivalent, so I left it as is.

Makina: Well then, I'll give you the beginning equipment for banchou.

Makina completely ignored the raging Tsurugi and opened a treasure chest with a kind smile on her face.

In Yamata no Orochi SNS, when you started, you were provided with 200 gold and beginning equipment suitable for your occupation.

"What kind of equipment do I get...?"

Tsurugi checked the items she was handed and read them aloud.

"Well the game's just beginning, so most of my equipment slots are 'empty,' but... oh, I have a wooden sword in my right hand... wooden sword?! And I'm wearing a biker's jacket?! And I have 'cigarettes x 3' for starting items... what the hell?! It's still before the opening ceremony, so isn't this way too intense?! Wasn't this supposed to be a school fantasy filled with swords and magic?!"

Makina: Well then, please have a great time at school~~!

"No no no, when you see a student who looks like that, you shouldn't just send them off with a smile! This girl definitely isn't planning on having a great time at school! No, she's just going to rampage around and turn everything into some scene right out of a school gang manga!"

"My sincere condolences, neesan."

Kagami laughed mockingly at her sister's tragic situation and finished her own character.

"I'm done too."

"Ugh... I hope Kagami's character also turned out weird..."

Tsurugi was close to tears as she peeked at her little sister's screen.

Name: Kagami // Species: Elf // Gender: Female // Age: 16

"Ah, you chose to be an elf."

"Yes. Even if we move around as a group, I thought that we would need a healer... so I tried to pick an occupation along those lines. But if healing will be my main ability, then elves with their higher intelligence and magical abilities seem more suitable than humans with their higher physical strength."

"Ah, I see. So what occupation did you pick? Maybe a priest or a doctor?"

"I picked this one."

Brimming with confidence, Kagami pointed at the screen.

Occupation: Veterinarian

“Veterinarian?!”

“My dream is to sleep peacefully forever while surrounded by lots and lots of animals with fluffy fur. How lovely it would be to be a veterinarian...”

“If there really is a vet who would just sleep with her patients without treating them I would give her a black eye... but you wanted to be a healer, right? Vets... can they even heal humans?”

“Ah.”

Kagami had already handed her document to Makina, and at that point there was no taking it back anymore. But at Tsurugi’s statement, she seemed to realize something and her eyes widened.

And then she quickly closed her eyes, fell to her side, and started sleeping.

“You fall asleep whenever things aren’t going your way, don’t you...?”

The occupation that Kagami had chosen could no longer be changed at this point. Kagami was sleeping, so Tsurugi checked her little sister’s starting equipment instead.

Right Hand: Syringe.

“That’s scary!”

Tsurugi seemed quite terrified, and her little sister mumbled something as she got back up from her nap.

“Ah, and I also have ‘anesthetics x 3.’ It seems that I can load the syringe with various medicines and inject people. Hm, if we can melt the cigarettes that neesan has into liquid, nicotine is a deadly poison, so I could probably instantly kill our enemies with that.”

“Like I said, that’s really scary!”

“Tama’s also doooone~~!!”

As her two older sisters talked about things that did not sound quite appropriate for a fantasy game, Tama threw both her arms into the air.

Name: Tama // Species: Demon // Gender: Female // Age: 16

“...Why did you pick ‘demon’?”

“Huh? But but, Tsurugi-nee said we should pick something that’s closest to our real self-“

“Well, if you had to choose from ‘human,’ ‘elf,’ and ‘demon,’ I guess in the end, we’d be closest to ‘demon.’”

Kagami nodded, seeming convinced.

“What occupation did you pick?”

“Ummm, well... Tama picked... ehehe.”

Tama pointed at the screen happily.

Occupation: Pâtissier

“Pâtissier?!”

Tsurugi yelled, and Kagami uneasily asked a question.

“...What’s that again? I vaguely know, but... what kind of job is that?”

“I don’t really know either but... umm... something like a sweets maker?”

“Umm, well, umm, Tama was thinking, if she becomes a person who makes sweets, then maybe she can then eat lots of chocolates and sweet things every day. So Tama picked pâtissier... ehehe.”

That girl sure was loyal to her own desires...

Tsurugi let out an exasperated sigh.

“This is supposed to be a school fantasy with swords and magic... but all the occupations are pretty realistic, aren’t they? Well, leaving my banchou aside, we have a vet and a pâtissier... we sound like a group who would earn a lot of money, but what a group like that would ever do together is way too unclear.”

“Ah, Tama got her equipment!”

Tama checked the items she had received from Makina.

Right Hand: Kitchen Knife

“That’s also so damn scary!”

“But but, Tama can’t cook without a knife...”

“That’s true! That’s true, but...!!”

As the three sisters were having their friendly chat, my brother sat in silence.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

He didn't speak a word and a gloomy atmosphere surrounded him.

"Sensei?"

Kagami noticed him and approached him from behind.

"It seems there's a time limit for this, so you should choose quickly..."

Exactly. There was a countdown timer on the screen, and at this point only ten seconds were left on the clock.

But unfortunately, my brother was too indecisive.

Name: Kamiomi // Species: Human // Gender: Male // Age: 16

He seemed to have at least figured it out up until there, but it looked like my brother couldn't decide on an occupation.

Well, my brother had come this far in life by just doing what other people told him to do, so it was almost impossible for him to choose an occupation that he wanted...

My brother nodded and seemed to be completely puzzled.

“What should I do...? What in the world you should I do...? E-Everyone, what kind of person should I become? What kind of occupation should I pick...?”

“Can’t you just pick one you like?”

Tsurugi looked like she was at a loss.

But in the time it took all that to happen, the countdown timer hit zero and the screen completely changed.

Makina:

Makina collected the document and inspected it closely.

And then she took off her glasses while heaving a sigh, and threw a scornful look out the screen.

Makina: It seems that you really couldn’t pick an occupation in the time limit... it’s just a game, and you still can’t choose? Even in real life, you must be some parasitic piece of trash who can’t decide anything for yourself and just mooches off your parents...

“The person who was treating me so nicely is now hurling insults at me?!”

My brother was being treated badly even by the game characters.

**Makina: Well, fine, I guess I'll just have to pick your occupation for you then...
hmph, I guess something like this would be best for a good-for-nothing like you!**

Makina put on a completely different expression and shouted, after which she scribbled something on my brother's document.

Occupation: Loser

Makina: Well, go have fun in school, you looooooser~~...Kyahahaha!! You're probably trying to use this game to make up for your pitiful social life in real life, but don't think the Internet is that nice of a place, you idiot! I hope you fall into despair and go hang yourself to death!

"Did I really do something to deserve such terrible abuse?!"

"You have a pretty hard life even in games, don't you..."

Tsurugi heaved a deep, deep sigh as she stared at both my astonished brother and Makina, who was laughing uproariously in the voice of a famous seiyuu.

The future was already way too uncertain... hello this is a test

Chapter 10: Welcome to Takamagahara

The “main display,” a display that was similar to those you could find in normal SNS programs, was now showing on everyone’s screens.

“Hm, I see I see.”

I had no idea how my brother could see in front of him with his eyes covered like that, but he seemed to be convinced about something.

On this screen you could write a blog, message your friends, manage a forum, make a community... most of the communication functions could be found here (of course, you could access this screen from anywhere in the game).

It was also a bit like the menus you would find in normal RPGs... on the display, you could change your character’s appearance and equipment. There were also minigames that begged for people to try and break the top score, and there were plenty of people who never even played the game and just stayed on this main display.

“Anyways, we spent all this time making our characters. So let’s play and see what this is all about!”

Tsurugi sounded excited and began to manipulate her controller by herself.

“And then we login... alright.”

Tsurugi quickly found the “Head Towards School” button on the screen and was the first to login.

Afterwards, everyone else followed her example and did the same.

The screen changed, and after a short loading time...

“Ohhhhh...”

My brother sounded pretty impressed.

On the screen was a town that clearly belonged in a fantasy game, even though for some reason it also felt somewhat traditional Japanese.

The castle town of Takamagahara Academy stretched out on the screen, lined with houses that looked to be made out of hardened earth (it seemed that since the demon king had attacked, the academy was turned into a castle, and so the town surrounding it was called the castle town).

When you first logged in, you were plopped in some random place in the town.

Almost all the other people being shown on the screen seemed to either be human players or characters who had graduated and become NPCs, since they had HP and SP values and bars showing above their heads.

Swordsmen wearing Western suits of armor, brave-looking werewolves, half-bird people with wings sprouting from their backs... there were some really ridiculous characters walking around.

By the way, my brother was...

“This is me...?”

His voice shivered, almost like he had found some new sense of pleasure, and he was getting strange looks from the people around him.

Your character’s appearance changed based on your equipment.

For some reason, my brother had received no equipment from Makina-san, and was just wonderfully and completely naked.

His character on screen was also crudely based off the photo of him in real life, so he looked extremely sketchy.

Another player couldn't help but stop at the sight of him. "Umm... I'm not sure why you look like that, but here." He handed my brother an "old rag."

Geez, it wasn't a few seconds into the game and my brother was already a charity case.

My brother equipped the "old rag" and began wandering around (it's not like he was any less exposed like this, but at least he could walk around now without getting arrested).

"These games are pretty amazing. It's so realistic. The only games I've played are the ones where blocks just fall endlessly from top to bottom..."

"Games like this are pretty common these days."

But even so, Tsurugi seemed to be having fun as she played the game while lying rudely sprawled on the floor.

Tsurugi was the one who loved games, so she seemed to quickly adapt and take a leadership role.

"Let's meet up first. Looks like the entrance ceremony is going to take place in the 'Auditorium' in the 'Academy.' We have to go to that first. It'd be pointless if we try to do things separately, so let's go to that 'auditorium' and... I think there's a bronze statue in front of it, so let's all meet there."

“Roger.”

“How do you move...?”

Kagami responded calmly, but beside her Tama was quickly clicking the mouse.

“Ah, you do it like this. Tama knows now. And this is talk... and Tama can check her items with this button...”

As expected from an elementary schooler; she didn’t know much but learned quickly.

The one I was most worried about was my brother, but the people around him seemed concerned at his suspicious appearance and spoke up to him. “Umm, I’m not sure if you got attacked by bandits or something, but... are you alright?” they would say. My brother fearlessly asked those people for directions and was guided to the auditorium.

Unlike me, my brother had good communication skills.

It made me jealous.

“But it really feels like we’re walking through a fantasy world, doesn’t it?”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

There were a few boring moments when everyone was moving to the meeting spot, so people began to chat.

“Well, no matter how pretty things are... I still prefer reality.”

“The minute you say that it’s all over.”

Tsurugi gave a dry smile at her sister’s opinion.

“But you know, isn’t it boring to only be able to play in ‘reality’? I like games. It makes me feel like I’m taking a trip through a dream world someone else created.”

“You can get that from novels too... well, I guess that only in games can you control a character as an extension of yourself. I feel this can be dangerous, but this kind of empathy, this kind of ‘division of self’ is... ah, look, I arrived.”

“Tama is also in front of the auditorium! Kagami-nee, where are you?”

The school grounds were pretty spacious, but it was jam packed with students.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

There had been so many new users lately, and the academy grounds were areas that anybody could use, so too many people would gather there and the lag and general slowdowns that this caused was now a major problem in Yamata no Orochi SNS.

But perhaps the Yagami Sisters had done something; that rage-inducing phenomenon didn't occur this time, and the characters smoothly moved across the screens.

They were in the school plaza.

Right next to the obvious "auditorium" building painted in white.

For some reason, there was also a bronze statue of Saigou Takamori (1) and his pet dog next to the building. My brother finally reached that statue.

My brother expressed his gratitude towards the kind people who led him here. It looked like even in games, my brother was destined to bow his head to people forever and ever.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Kagami-san. Tama-san."

Tama: y*#haioej

“Tama? What’s wrong? Did you finally lose it?”

“Talking to everyone like this is not too video-gamey, so Tama is trying to make her character talk for her, but Tama doesn’t know really how to use the keyboard...”

“Typing out every sentence is a bother and we don’t have microphones... so can’t we just talk orally with each other?”

Tama: Ooo

Tama didn’t seem to be happy with that and she let out a strange sound for a while.

Their characters’ appearances changed a bit based on their starting equipment.

But their characters were still based on real photos, so they looked quite similar to their characters.

Kagami’s character had average height and an average build, but because she was an elf her ears were slightly pointed.

She was wearing the “Nurse Uniform -3” and “Nurse’s Cap -3” she had been given at the start of the game, and she looked exactly like a nurse (although, the thick syringe she was holding was a bit scary-looking and made her look like some sort of serial killer).

As a side note, the minus signs next to the equipment could be improved if you went through certain tests in the school to strengthen your equipment, and could even eventually become plus signs. In other words, if you really liked a piece of equipment, you didn’t have to go out of your way to change it to something stronger but could just focus on building it up.

In Yamata no Orochi SNS, your character’s appearance changed based on your equipment, so that kind of system was put in place (I had also seen fantastically stupid people running around wearing “School Swimsuit +240.”)

“Ohh, Kagami-san, what a lovely nurse you are.”

“I’m a veterinarian. I have no interest in normal humans.”

“Paparin! Look at Tama too!”

It seemed that Tama had learned to do random things in the game, and her character was now spinning around.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Her character had a bewitchingly nice body that for some reason seemed to fit quite well into the game world. It was as if someone had tried to make a character that looked like the ideal woman.

She was a demon, so her skin color was a bit darker, and she had crimson tattoos around her body that signified her loyalty to the demon king (I know that the demons are supposed to be spies that are infiltrating the school, but try a bit harder to hide that, dammit).

Tama was a pâtissier, but for some reason she was wearing a “Maid Uniform -3.”

That outfit was a rare item she had been given at the start. The fact that these sisters were happening on so many rare items so often was probably because they were divine existences that got special treatment in this world.

Other than her maid outfit, Tama was clutching a kitchen knife in her hand, and she really looked like just a bad dream.

“You two really look quite cute.”

“But walking together with sensei like this is pretty disgusting.”

Kagami looked repulsed at my almost-naked brother.

“So we’re just waiting for Tsurugi-nee then!”

Tama looked all around her, and like a pet dog quickly honed in on her sister’s location.

“Ah! It’s Tsurugi-nee! Hey, over here!!”

“Funyaa. Wait. Something is wrong.”

Tama tried to jump for her sister, but Kagami held her back.

Because a bit away from where those two were standing was...

Tsurugi: I’m telling you to apologize!

Kenji☆: Ugh, give me a break...

Miki☆: Ugh, what’s up with this girl?! She’s so slow! We just bumped into you a bit! Let’s just ignore it and go, Ken-chan!

It looked like Tsurugi was arguing with a pretty boy and girl couple (they probably had tried hard with the character creation tool to make themselves look pretty).

Tsurugi: You didn't just bump into me, I definitely took damage there. You trying to screw with me, huhh? I wouldn't care too much if you just said sorry, but why did you just laugh and try to go off somewhere? You think you two are the heroes and I'm the bad guy? That's not right, is it? I want to see some remorse. Apologize!

Miki☆: What the hell... this girl is annoying. She can't take a hint. We're just trying to have fun playing this game! Is this girl a complete idiot...?!

Kenji☆: You want money? I'll give you money.

Tsurugi received 1000 gold from **Kenji☆**!

Tsurugi: That's not it at all, you damn rotten eggs. Did I tell you to pay me? Huh? Did I ask you even once for money? I didn't, did I? I just told you to say sorry! Stop acting like spoiled brats! You think you can get through life by just saying everything is annoying and trying to pay all your problems away, you bastards?!

Kagami looked completely at a loss at the strange scene of this midget banchou lecturing this pretty boy/girl couple clad in Western armor.

"N-Neesan is shaking them down... even though she's kind of a teacher..."

Miki☆: Uwaaah! Kenji told me this would be fun but Kenji is an idiot! I quit! I'm not gonna play these kinds of games anymore! It's seriously boring and annoying!

Kenji☆: Ugh, g-

Kenji's words cut off midway and both their characters stopped moving.

The players had abandoned their characters.

Tsurugi: And they still didn't apologize... their parents should be ashamed, geez.

"I think neesan shouldn't be talking here..."

Unlike Tsurugi, who was skillfully using her feet to rapidly type out all the words, Kagami seemed to be at her limit just moving her character around, so she just spoke normally.

"These self-absorbed young people might be depressing, but old women who use manners and law as shields to make their points are also pretty annoying, aren't they?"

Tsurugi: Who the hell are you calling an old woman...?

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Tsurugi was typing and Kagami was talking out loud, so it looked like Tsurugi was mumbling to herself in the game.

In any case, everyone had met up, so for now the group headed for the auditorium.

Teacher// Kikyou: The entrance ceremony for Takamagahara Academy will start soon!

A teacher in traditional Japanese clothing who looked like a samurai was gathering students in front of the auditorium.

@@@@@

Headmaster// Natsumegu: To all our new students, welcome to Takamagahara Academy~~! Myai name is Natsumegu, and I'm the headmyaster!

For some reason, a young girl with cat ears in a long-sleeved kimono was standing on her tippy toes on the microphone stand and speaking with all her strength.

Takamagahara Academy was based in Japanese mythology, so almost everything was done in a classic Japanese style.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

The auditorium was also designed to look like a samurai's home, to the point where the multinational students actually stuck out like sore thumbs.

The sounds of armor clinking filled the air as these apprentice guardians charged with protecting the world from the demon king talked in low voices and listened reverently to the headmaster's words.

Headmaster// Natsumegu: The demon king might be sealed, but the demons who swear allegiance to him are still working in secret, and monsters are still coming forth from the lands that were polluted by the war with the demon king. You are the proud people who chose to fight against evil in such a world and protect those who are important to you, nyah! Hone your skills in this academy and become people deserving of the title "hero," nyah!

The headmaster gave a carefree smile and her split tails waved from side to side.

Headmaster// Natsumegu: Although, you're free to not spend every moment studying, but also to find friends and have fun with them over the next three years nyah! The bonds you form, the memories you create, those will eventually become your sharpest weapons, as well as your strongest shields nyah!

The headmaster continued with her believable but perhaps rather pointless speech. She was supposed to be two hundred years old, and lolicons just did terrible things to her in doujinshi (even though I felt we were past the age when everything was fine as long as characters were "technically" above 18...)

My brother and the others were also there in the last row of new students.

They were exchanging information while vaguely listening to the headmaster's speech.

Tsurugi: Anyways, it looks like we're all in the same class.

The class assignments had been announced before the headmaster's address. My brother and the others had been put in "First Year, Class 47" (That sure is a lot of classes! But Takamagahara Academy was actually a new academy, so this was in fact on the low side), and their homeroom teacher was "One-Eyed Former Bandit// Kibamaru." If you were a bandit before, please stop trying to be a teacher now...

"It's because we preregistered as 'companions' before we started the game. The academy is probably being considerate and trying to keep friends from getting separated."

Kagami gave her response.

"Companions" were like the party members you had in RPGs, or the friends you had in SNS programs.

Once you became “companions” with someone, you would be able to track that person’s location, would be able to talk with that person even over long distances, would have each other’s blogs displayed on your main displays, among other convenient features.

The academy also held having companions in high regard, and made sure to keep friends together in the same classes, as well as offering various extra quests and events depending on how many companions you had.

Tsurugi: Although, just listening to some important guy going on and on about things is pretty boring.

“Hearing someone who’s supposed to be a teacher saying that is just a bit...”

Tsurugi: It’s pointless for all of us to stay here listening to this. Kagami, you stay here and listen and tell me later if the headmaster says something important. I’m going over there to explore.

Was she a damn child?! She was so restless that I honestly wanted to scream that at her... but Tsurugi secretly slipped out of her row and headed for the exit of the auditorium.

“Ah, neesan... ugh, geez.”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Kagami seemed a bit shocked, but she seemed to decide to listen to the headmaster to the end and didn't give chase.

With this lineup, if Kagami wasn't diligent it didn't seem like anybody else would be...

But what exactly was going to happen if you tried to slip out during the middle of the entrance ceremony? I haven't ever seen someone try that before, so I didn't even know... (and from your second time through the game and onwards, you could skip the opening ceremony and the first homeroom if you wanted).

Tsurugi: Ah.

Bzzz. A strange sound effect rang through the air, and right in front of Tsurugi and blocking the exit of the auditorium... a giant appeared.

His body was clad in samurai armor and an outrageously large samurai's helmet.

He was gripping a rough-looking long sword and steam was being released from his entire body.

The battle theme began to play, and Tsurugi braced herself.

Gate guard// Tsunju: Leaving in the middle of the entrance ceremony is forbidden. If you really still want to go out, then you will have to first defeat me...

Tsurugi: Interesting...

Tsurugi gripped the controller and her eyes sparkled.

Tsurugi: Good timing, you fat bastard. I was just getting bored too. Hyah!

Tsurugi began to push button after button, forcing the door guard into a battle.

Yamata no Orochi SNS had a few battle modes: there was the “Beginner’s Mode,” where you could click on an enemy to attack just like a normal online game, as well as a “Maniac Mode,” where you could enter in complicated commands and fight like you would in a one-on-one fighter.

Naturally, Tsurugi was in Maniac Mode.

She had just started the game so her stats were pretty low, but she evaded her opponent’s huge swings and made precise attacks with her wooden sword.

If she was using Beginner’s Mode, she definitely wouldn’t be able to move so fluidly, and she probably would have been knocked out by now.

Gate guard// Tsunju: Fufu... it looks like there are some quite lively new students this year... interesting. Well then, I won't go easy anymore! If you can win against me, the special event "Eh? Don't tell me you're... the door guard's secret real face!" will start...!

Tsurugi: Uwah, that's interesting! I'll definitely win!

Gate guard// Tsunju: I won't lose to you... after all, if you see my real face... I'll have to marry you...!

Tsurugi: Whoa, don't tell me you're really a pretty girl?! I'll definitely win! I'll capture you!

Tsurugi's movements sped up.

"Ummm....."

My brother turned his attention away from the entrance ceremony and was now watching the amazing ongoing battle in bewilderment.

"Should we go help? We're her 'companions,' after all."

"Leave her be. She's an embarrassment."

Kagami's shoulders shook from embarrassment, but then she blinked, seeming to sink into thought.

"But if we do things like that... then we'll activate various events, won't we? So trying lots of things out might be a better strategy than just going through the game aimlessly. The enemy might be hiding in an event and causing an irregularity from within..."

"Fwaahhhhhhhhhhh..."

Whether Tama understood her sister's words or not, she gave a slow yawn.

"Tama is also bored... there's nothing to do, poke poke."

"Wha-... Tama?"

Inside the screen, Tama had grabbed onto and was pulling on Kagami's clothes from behind her.

Tama seemed impressed, and held onto Kagami as she twisted her body around.

"Hwawawaaa~~ ...Tama is touching Kagami-nee! That's fun... well, what if... Tama pulls with all her strength...?"

Tama received “Nurse’s Uniform -3” from Kagami!

“Funyaaaaaaaaahh?!?!?!?”

Kagami let out a rare scream.

On the screen, Kagami had gotten her clothes spectacularly pulled away by Tama, thus finding herself stripped of her nurse’s uniform.

And naturally, she was completely naked underneath.

“W-W-W-What are you doing Tama?!?!?”

“Oh, Kagami-nee stripped! That’s funny! It looks like ‘companions’ can take equipment from each other!”

“Special Event// Completely. Naked. Assembly! A Disgraceful Entry Ceremony” has been activated!

“That’s way too special!! Funyaah, why is everyone staring at me?! What?! Why is everyone throwing money at me?! It’s not like I stripped because I wanted money!! Headmaster, do something about this don’t just stand there and throw bundles of coins at me with that smile on your face!!”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

And so, the entrance ceremony turned into Kagami's onstage strip show.

This game's balance was seriously screwed up...

@@@@@

Once the entrance ceremony ended, my brother and the others moved to the "First Year, Class 47" classroom.

There were around forty students in each class, and each class also had its own homeroom teacher.

You often got special events and quests with your class and not just with your "companions," so for the next year (in game time), they would have plenty of opportunities to meet the other players in this class.

"Things got so out of hand from the very beginning..."

Kagami had been stripped naked during the entrance ceremony – an event that would probably have traumatized her had it happened in real life – and she sounded a bit depressed.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

While the homeroom teacher handed out textbooks and items and explained some of the important points of the class, the four of them were sitting in the back and chatting.

Teacher// Kibamaru: First, I want you to all try out different things in preparation for next week's event, 'School Event// New Student Aptitude Test.' And then we'll test everyone's abilities, and that will decide what classes and events will follow.

The one-eyed middle-aged man wearing animal furs explained these things to the class with his back to the blackboard.

Teacher// Kibamaru: First, you should set about getting used to using the various facilities around the school, and doing your best to complete quests given to you by other teachers and students. You'll also trigger events as you wander around and try things out!

The teacher passed maps to everyone.

Teacher// Kibamaru: I've passed out maps to the beginner's dungeon, 'The Silent Forest,' which is right outside the castle town gates, as well as the dungeon within the academy, 'Library Labyrinth 1F!' You should consider going there and leveling up or hunting for items. Every time you clear a dungeon, talk to me and I'll give you a map to a new dungeon and some small rewards. You can also join the 'Club Activities' or 'School Committee' communities and trigger various events, or just go and find new companions!

And so on and so forth.

While the homeroom teacher spoke enthusiastically, my brother and the others were having a strategy meeting at their own pace.

“Funyaah. The events around here are just too strange. I don’t know if they’re normal events or some malicious form of an alteration.”

Kagami sighed, but in contrast, Tsurugi seemed quite happy.

Tsurugi: I like this game. I mean, the gate guard wants to meet during lunch... you think it’s alright if I just strip her and jump her right there and then? Or maybe I shouldn’t jump the gun and spend a bit more time earning more affection points...

“Neesan, please stop randomly turning Yamata no Orochi SNS into your own personal eroge.”

This game gave the players so much freedom that if she wanted to jump the gate guard, she probably could... it was just scary how much freedom you had here.

“So what should we do? Right now, it doesn’t seem like any common-sense-defying alterations have happened... so perhaps the gods have nothing to do with Yamata no Orochi SNS?”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Maybe the students who aren't coming to school are just having so much fun with the game that they locked themselves up in their rooms...?"

Tsurugi: It's still too soon to tell, I think.

Tsurugi's expression turned serious as she responded.

Tsurugi: Even if this is an alteration, if it's not one that destroys the world and gets lots of humans involved, it's best to just leave it alone... It's just that, this feels different than what I usually feel... even if it's an alteration, I guess you could say it feels like it doesn't have the usual sense of purpose...

After a bit of pondering, Tsurugi made her conclusion.

Tsurugi: In any case, let's concentrate today on playing Yamata no Orochi SNS. If we can't feel anything strange about it, then we'll visit each of the missing students' homes and investigate them one by one.

"Hm, that might be the best course of action..."

Teacher// Kibamaru: Hey you students over there! Don't talk while the teacher's talking!

Kibamaru attacks! Kibamaru throws 'chalk'!

Kamiomi receives 26 damage!

“Why did he hit me?! I wasn’t even talking!!”

Kamiomi has died!

“And I also died?!”

Tsurugi: Why do you only have twenty HP...? I have eighty, and Kagami and Tama have fifty...

Kamiomi’s head was split in two by the chalk and he collapsed on his desk. The homeroom teacher stared at him and shrugged.

Teacher// Kibamaru: Hm, looks like Kamiomi-kun died. Someone take him to the nurse’s office.

Tsurugi: That’s it?! Will he really be okay if we just take him to the nurse’s office?! Also, what kind of homeroom teacher just goes ‘hmm’ when a student is killed?!

“Well, in any case, I don’t think it’s a good idea to just leave him there...”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Kagami picked up my dead brother and headed for the classroom door.

“Let’s head for the nurse’s office. That means everyone.”

Tsurugi: Yeah, we should try to stick together as much as possible. Tama, you come too.

“Okaaaay~~!”

Tama stopped scribbling on her desk and followed everyone else out.

Teacher// Kibamaru: There are still things I have to tell you, so after you revive Kamiomi-kun come back to the classroom, okay?

You have accepted the quest “Take Your Classmate to the Nurse’s Office!”

Difficulty: 1/10

Quest Reward: 200 Gold

Tsurugi: We get money for taking a classmate to the nurse’s office. That’s just a bit...

All kinds of humans and not-quite-humans were walking along the wide passageway outside.

Tsurugi took the “School Map¹” item from her inventory and checked it.

Tsurugi: Looks like the nurse’s office is pretty far away, so let’s head for this magical portal here labeled ‘Shift Portal.’ Seems like if you pay a set amount of gold there, you can teleport to anywhere you want in the school.

“Walking everywhere would definitely be troublesome... and dragging this corpse around with me everywhere is also a bit...”

Kagami nodded, but then suddenly frowned.

“...Hm?”

The background music changed.

The other people walking around Kagami and the others vanished, followed by red flashes and what seemed like an earthquake. After that, the words “ENEMY ATTACK!” appeared boldly on the screen.

¹ A famous samurai.

“What’s happening...?”

Tsurugi: Looks like some kind of monster’s come. When I was fighting the gate guard this kind of thing happened too.

“We’re in the school grounds, and there are still monsters...?”

Tsurugi was calm, but Kagami seemed bewildered. Tama just paid a worried glance at my brother.

Slowly, a group of people emitting waves of menace appeared before them.

They were people who seemed completely out of place in a classical Japanese, elegant school...

Take their blonde hair, or their pompadours², or their metal bats, or the cigarettes they were smoking, or the unsightly ways they were squatting there... they just seemed too much like old-fashioned...

Delinquent A: You that bastard new student people are talkin’ bout?

² A kind of hairstyle.

Delinquent B: C'mere a second. We're gonna teach you how you ain't in middle school anymore.

“.....”

Kagami turned her sleepy gaze in her sister's direction.

“Looks like you have guests, banchou.”

Tsurugi: And this was supposed to be a sword and magic fantasy school adventure...

Chapter 11: Nurse's Office: No Minors Allowed

A dozen delinquents stood in Tsurugi and company's way. No matter how you thought about it, these delinquents probably had something to do with Tsurugi (she was dressed in a biker gang jacket, after all), so all of the delinquents were staring at her silently.

"Special Event// New Students Bullied by the Delinquent Upperclassmen" has been activated!

"This game is just getting insane..."

Kagami looked unhappy, but the delinquents didn't mind the fishy way in which Kagami and the others were acting. They just continued to talk as they were programmed to.

Delinquent A: We've heard about you... you say you're a banchou?

Delinquent B: But you know, if you come to this school you gotta obey the rules at 'Takamagahara Academy.' Underclassmen bow down to upperclassmen. Got it?

Delinquent C: How 'bout you get on your knees and pledge your loyalty to us first?

The delinquents smiled as they closed in.

Delinquent B: We're not doin' this cuz we hate you or anything. It's training, got it? Shaking down innocent passerby, rampaging around the opening ceremonies... gotta teach you a lesson so you feel sorry about your actions, right?

"Like this, it seems like oneesan is really a character in one of those manga about delinquents. Ahh, no matter how properly I try to live, just having one delinquent relative makes my future bleak indeed..."

Tsurugi: Shut up.

Tsurugi completely ignored the delinquents and pushed the "Help" button on screen, beginning to look up a few things. Each of the three Yagami sisters sure just went at her own pace...

Tsurugi: This is bad... if a character "dies," then you have to "revive" him as soon as possible or else he's "terminated." And just like how that sounds, the character would disappear forever. And the longer a character remains "dead," the harder it is to successfully "revive" him... we really don't have the time to deal with these idiots...

"W-We can't run away?"

Tama seemed nervous and looked at my brother, who was still being carried by Kagami.

By the way, my brother's character had died, so he was pretty free now and was going around serving everyone drinks. Geez, he has no sense of urgency at all...

"Funyaa. It's useless to try and run. These events will be forced to continue until the battle ends. The only two choices are to be completely defeated or to beat up all those delinquents."

Tsurugi: Well then, looks like we got to kill all our enemies here quickly.

Tsurugi readied her wooden sword.

Tsurugi: If you're "terminated," then you can't make a new character for a while... so maybe this "enemy" is trying to terminate all of us so we can't meddle in Yamata no Orochi SNS anymore... It's still unclear who our enemy is, and whether the gods have anything to do with this, but that's even more of a reason to prevent the death of our characters, who can interface with this world and help us investigate.

After that, Tsurugi faced the gang of delinquents, her biker's jacket flying in the wind.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Tsurugi: Don't think you small fry can do anything against this cute little Tsurugi-chan. Come at me, I'll finish you off !

Delinquent A: Interesting... you guys, let's go!"

Delinquent B: Don't underestimate us!

Delinquent C: Hyaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhh!!!

The delinquents let out completely clichéd shouts of fury and ran at them.

HP and SP meters now appeared over each of their heads, making their statuses easy to read.

We were in a wide hallway, but the delinquents didn't seem to have any plans whatsoever and just made a mad dash at the Yagami sisters one by one.

"Uwahh... during battle everything spins around and around..."

Kagami seemed a bit troubled.

"For someone who likes to take it easy, dealing with things that go this fast is a bit..."

Tsurugi: Kagami, Tama, get back!

The younger sisters had yet to get used to the game, so Tsurugi ordered them back. She sent her blade right into the closest delinquent . Her attack was extremely swift.

Tsurugi's attack! Her wooden sword thrusts forward sharply!

Delinquent A takes 75 damage!

Delinquent A: Gyahghh!!

With that one attack, the delinquent's HP gauge was completely depleted, he burst apart in midair... and vanished.

An unnatural-looking treasure box was left in the hallway, and with a “funyaa,” Kagami went over and opened it. There was a “blood-soaked onigiri¹” inside.

As her little sister lazily went around and picked up the treasure and the gold which had been scattered about, Tsurugi was showing just how ferocious she could be.

¹ Onigiri is a Japanese riceball.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

There were a lot of delinquents, but Tsurugi's power was not to be trifled with... she was cleaning up all the enemies incredibly quickly.

Tsurugi: I defeated gate guard-chan and my level went up... yes, there's no way I can lose now! I made a promise to meet gate guard-chan at lunch, after all...! I'm gonna beat you all to bits and then go confess my love to gate guard-chan!

"Nee-san, please stop indirectly sending up death flags."

Kagami was opening up another treasure box. There was a "blood-soaked headband" inside. Why was every damn thing soaked in blood?

Tsurugi: But there's seriously no end to this... how many delinquents are in this damn school?!

"Funyaa. Seems there's an unexpectedly large number of bad eggs at this school, doesn't it?"

Tsurugi: Even though the headmaster was wearing cat ears and looked like she came right out of a fairy tale...

"There's a back side to every fairy tale too... Tama, I'm leaving sensei to you."

Kagami left my brother to Tama and joined the battle.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

“I’ve gotten used to their movements... it seems these delinquents move in patterns. I can deal with them now too.”

Just like she said, Kagami dodged as a delinquent came down on her with his weapon, and slowly moved behind him. After that, she held the thick syringe she was holding aloft, and...

Kagami’s attack!

Shhhlp! Her huge syringe plunges into Delinquent C’s heart, causing him immense pain and pouring narcotics into him! Delinquent C screams, clawing at his throat, and convulses on the floor like a fish before his eyes roll back into his head and he faints!

Tsurugi: Why was that syringe attack’s description so detailed?! That’s seriously scary!

“I don’t know. But he’s only fainted from the narcotics, so I leave the rest to neesan.”

Tsurugi: I really think you’d die if you get narcotics injected right into your heart though...

Tsurugi grumbled and dealt the finishing blow to the delinquent.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

For a little while longer, the two sister team wreaked havoc on the delinquents.

Kagami would inject the enemy with narcotics, and Tsurugi would finish him off with her wooden sword.

Their efficiency went up, the threat level went down, and the number of surviving enemies quickly diminished.

“Oh.”

But that couldn't continue forever.

Kagami sighed while still holding onto her syringe.

“I've run out of narcotics. I won't be able to fight anymore.”

Tsurugi: But it looks like you can replace that with another item you have. So how about you dissolve my tobacco in some water... seems like if you add a lot of sugar it'll taste like chocolate too.

“I don't want any chocolates that would kill you instantly if you ate them. This isn't going to work... it seems that if you don't go to the 'Laboratory' and 'mix' the ingredients together then you can't refill this syringe.”

Tsurugi: Ugh, that's inconvenient... huh?!

As if the game had gotten angry at these two sisters who were just having a relaxed conversation, the background music changed, and the atmosphere became eerie, signaling that a boss character or something like that was about to appear.

The screen flashed red, and all the delinquents looked back at the center of the hallway.

Delinquent F: Ohh, Toshi-kun!

Delinquent G: Toshi-kun's come! This battle is ours!

This Toshi-kun or whatever was a muscular giant, whose purple pompadour towered above his head like some lethal weapon.

He had on leather clothes with a lot of spikes sprouting out, and was also wearing sunglasses.

He looked like the kind of guy who had no interest in anything except his bike and picking fights.

Toshi-kun pretty much ignored all the other delinquents and rushed straight at Tsurugi.

Tsurugi: Hwah?!

He was so much faster than the other delinquents, and Tsurugi had let down her guard, so she was completely caught by surprise by his tackle and sent flying.

Her small body tumbled down the hallway, and her HP gauge went down.

Tsurugi: Impressive... so you're the chief of this gang of delinquents, huh?

Toshi-kun: Looks like you've been taking care of my subordinates... but I won't permit any more mischief past this... prepare to see Hell.

Toshi-kun spoke in a harsh tone.

The other delinquents surrounded them at a distance to watch the fight. It seemed like this was a pretty tough opponent for Tsurugi at her current level. She went through all her techniques and somehow dodged her enemy's attacks, but even if she hit him with her wooden sword, her opponent's HP wouldn't drop by very much.

On the other hand, her opponent swung around a big wooden plank, and if that plank even touched Tsurugi her HP would plummet .

“Neesan!”

Kagami seemed panicked and was clicking all over the screen.

“I’ll try some healing magic... ummm... it’s this one!”

Kagami used “Animal Heal”!

“Animal Heal” has no effect on humans!

Tsurugi: Uwaah, so you seriously can’t heal humans?! What a damn useless vet!

“What?! Vet is a respected, wonderful job! Please apologize, neesan!”

Tsurugi: You’re scolding me?! Uwah, crap, my HP is almost zero!

While reacting to her idiot little sister, Tsurugi seemed to have gotten into quite a pinch.

And then came the icing on the cake.

Toshi-kun's special attack! Toshi-kun Charge!

Tsurugi's "wooden sword" was destroyed!

Tsurugi: My weapon got destroyed?! That's possible?! Crap, I won't be able to do any damage barehanded! I'm gonna lose at this rate!

Toshi-kun's special attack! Toshi-kun Bear Hug!

Tsurugi cannot move!

Tsurugi: Ugyah, I feel like I'm in a bit of a bind! Someone help me!

Tsurugi was being hugged by Toshi-kun and squeezed to death.

There was a huge size difference between the two of them, so it almost looked like a parent hugging his daughter.

But this skill would break spines if someone tried it in real life , so good boys and girls should refrain from trying it.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

As an added bonus, Tsurugi was pretty constricted so she couldn't do anything.

She couldn't run away, she couldn't attack... all she could do was watch her HP go down and down...

"Tsurugi-nee!"

Tama seemed to not be able to stand still anymore, and rushed at Toshi-kun after dropping my brother.

"Hmph! Don't do mean things to Tsurugi-nee!"

Tama's attack!

Rip!

Toshi-kun: ... Aghh!!

The carving knife stabs deep into Toshi-kun's side. His liver is torn up and his innards are damaged to the point where blood flows out of Toshi-kun's mouth. In the blink of an eye, his clothes, his skin, and then the hallway becomes painted red with fresh blood.

Toshi-kun's face pales and he groans.

Toshi-kun: *G-Gurgle...* she stabbed me... she stabbed me...! ... Aghh!!

The strength seeps from Toshi-kun's body and he collapses. The blood doesn't stop...

Tsurugi: Seriously, why are the descriptions for your attacks so vivid?! Although you did save me back there!

Tsurugi was released and landed on the floor. She gave a disgusted look down at Toshi-kun, who was now breathing raggedly.

At that point, a light flashed in the middle of the hallway, and a new character appeared and rushed to Toshi-kun's side.

Akemi: Kyaahh!! Toshi-kuuun!!

Toshi-kun: A-... Akemi... heh, sorry...

Akemi: Waaaah, who did such a terrible thing... murderers!!!!!!!!!!!!

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Toshi-kun: Don't cry, Akemi... it's fine like this... I've always known that one day I'd make a mistake like this... but it's a shame I have to die like a dog...

Akemi: No! Please don't die Toshi-kuun!! T-Toshi-kun is nothing like a do-"

"Hyah!"

Tama's attack!

Akemi's neck is cut and huge amounts of blood spurt up to the ceiling! Akemi looks at Tama with a complete look of disbelief on her face and collapses to the floor. Seeing his lover die within his arms, Toshi-kun begins to cry...

"Take this!"

Tama's attack!"

Toshi-kun died!

Tsurugi: What are you doing?!

As expected, Tsurugi seemed shocked and rushed over to her little sister.

Tsurugi: You killed them without any hesitation! Even though it looked like this was turning out to be a heartwarming dramatic scene! And you even killed this Akemi-chan who we didn't know anything about!

“?? Tsurugi-nee, this is a game and these are the enemies, right?

Tsurugi: Yeah, that's definitely true! But you're seriously scary!

Delinquent X: Whaaa?! T-They... they killed them... they're monsters!!

Delinquent H: Don't run, you all! We'll avenge Toshi-kun's death!

There were those who ran away lightning quick, but it seemed there were also some delinquents who were resolved to stay and battle to the death.

Tsurugi sighed.

Tsurugi: Well then, I guess Tama's pure desire to save me turned into an alteration and gave Tama's character a temporary powerup... that's a bit underhanded and I admit I don't like it very much... but we're not here to have fun. So maybe I'll get serious too?

Tsurugi took my brother from Kagami and gave a wicked smile.

Tsurugi: My wooden sword broke... so I'll just equip something else!

Tsurugi has equipped "loser"!

"Huh?! You can equip that?! One of your companion's corpses?!"

Tsurugi: Fufufu!

Tsurugi let out a strange laugh, and then took giant swings with my brother to mow down the delinquents. The delinquents were knocked flying, broke through the windows and flew outside, or had their entire HP gauge drained in one attack and exploded.

Tsurugi: This is nice. Looks like Tsukuyomi is more useful when he's dead... let's cut through like this!

"Looks like anything and everything goes in this game now , doesn't it...?"

Kagami grumbled, an amazed look on her face.

@@@@@

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

After conquering that mountain of corpses lying in rivers of blood, Tsurugi and the others paid gold at a magical portal, which teleported them to the nurse's office (maybe it was already getting spread around that those delinquents were now sinking in a sea of blood, but there were no more unwanted interruptions on the way there).

The nurse's office was also in a classical Japanese style, and it almost felt like they had taken a medical exam room from the Meiji Era² and made it larger.

Apart from the wooden walls and the floor and the ceiling, there were countless numbers of beds.

There were plenty of nurses wearing what looked like classical Japanese versions of modern nurse uniforms, and there were also doctors milling about.

Tsurugi and the others put my brother on one of those beds, and everyone breathed a sigh of relief.

Tsurugi: Geez, looks like we finally made it.

Tsurugi took a seat in one of the visitor chairs, her legs swinging freely back and forth.

² Late 1800s.

Tsurugi: Anyways, I'll have to go buy a weapon later... that wooden sword is toast. But it looks like we have a lot of money saved up now, so I can probably get a really nice sword or axe...

"We've also gained a few levels since we earned quite a lot of experience points... it seems those delinquents were tougher than they looked. Players who just started school should not have been able to defeat them."

Kagami also looked satisfied, and Tsurugi nodded.

Things have gone smoothly, but it'd still be annoying if Tsukuyomi dies on us every time something happens. We'll have to toughen this guy up too... actually, first we have to revive him. How do you do that again?

"Please wait, I'll read the explanation..."

Kagami clicked on an icon next to the bed, and read the words that appeared on her screen.

"Hmm... it seems you can ask the doctors here to handle everything, or we can participate in a minigame. But it also seems that it's preferable to choose the latter if we're here, since we will earn experience points and we don't have to pay lots of money to the doctors."

Tsurugi: We're in a school but the nurse's office costs money...

“What kind of minigame? Tama wants to play too! Tama wants to make Paparin all better again!”

“I’m not sure, but... life is about trying things out, so shall we try?”

“Okay!”

Tama seemed to cheer up, and Kagami began to advise her while reading the instructions.

At the same time, the screen changed.

” Minigame//Naughty Nurse’ s Office… ☆” has been activated!

A sketchy pink light shone and the background music changed to something that sounded pretty dirty.

“It’s dirty?! This is quite strange... neesan, did you use an alteration to make things like this? Earlier I had my clothes stripped off easily too...”

Tsurugi: I wouldn’t try a pointless alteration like this... I don’t know. Maybe the perverted side of me did this unconsciously.

Tsurugi seemed a bit proud (why?) and smiled.

“Umm...”

The same thing appeared on all three siblings’ screens.

In the middle was my brother lying on the bed.

A bunch of unnatural looking things were scattered around him... syringes, medicine capsules, apples, bottles with a skull-and-crossbones on them, and for some reason a whip and a candle...

“It seems like in this minigame you have to try all these items around here within the time limit and revive sensei... in other words, you have to nurse him back to health.”

“N-Nurse?”

Tama seemed bewildered, but Kagami urged her on.

“Tama’s screen is the only one which shows the time limit... so it’s fine, just hurry up and try things out. Even if you fail neesan and I are still here... so don’t worry about it.”

“O-Okay! I-I’ll nurse him... umm...”

Tama found a wash basin with ice water in it, and she put in a towel. After the towel had been plenty chilled, she put the towel on my brother’s forehead.

“H-How’s this?!”

Tsurugi: Nah, that’s what you would do if he had a cold... Tsukuyomi is dead right now...

Kamiomi: Thank you, Tama-san. Because of you I feel refreshed now.

Kamiomi’s affection points towards Tama have increased by 20!

Tsurugi: Affection points?! What the hell?!

Tsurugi was overly sensitive to galge³ lingo, and so she immediately reacted.

Kagami carefully read the instruction manual.

“Hmm... it seems that in this minigame, the primary objective isn’t to try realistic approaches to healing, but rather to be a devoted nurse and gain affection points.

³ Girl game – the kind of 18+ dating sims that Tsurugi likes playing.

Seems like you can do anything you want and the game won't fail you on this minigame."

Tsurugi: But I didn't even know there was this affection point parameter... does something happen if you get that parameter high enough?! Does something pervy happen?!

"Please stop getting so excited only when it comes to things like this... umm, please wait a moment. Ahh, if you raise affection points, when your characters graduate, you can get married, or in certain cases can also make children. And then you can use those children as your next characters..."

Tsurugi: Marriage?! Making children...?!

"The affection points automatically go up or down normally during the game. But it seems if you heal someone, or if you play a minigame like this and get closer to someone, these affection points go up by a lot. So neesan, who was swinging around sensei's corpse and ridiculing him like that, probably has the lowest affection points at this point."

Tsurugi: Dammit, if I knew we could make babies I would have been nicer to him!

You know, just because you can have children, that doesn't mean they're going to show an image of you making babies or make it into a minigame or something like that... you understand that, right?

I felt a bit conflicted here... but all I could do was watch.

“Next is umm... the thermometer?”

As the older sisters talked with each other, Tama was trying her very best to be a good nurse.

“Okay, open your mouth wide and say ‘ahhh.’ Let’s check your temperature~~ ☆ . “

Kamiomi: I understand. Tama-san is so kind.

Kamiomi’s affection points towards Tama have increased by 10!

“... Hm? The last few things sensei has said weren’t said out loud but were displayed on screen...”

Kagami realized that and looked at my brother’s screen.

And then a look of complete shock appeared on her face.

My brother's screen was showing something different from the other three screens; indeed, the scene on his screen could have been taken right out of a game.

Right in front of him was displayed an image of Tama (in a maid outfit), and the game gave him choices every time she did something.

Tama took the thermometer out and cocked her head to the side.

"Oh my? Papi, you don't have a temperature!"

How do you respond to Tama's actions?

(1) Thanks for worrying about me.

(2) How the hell am I supposed to have a temperature?! I'm a damn corpse, you idiot!

(3) Googoo gaga, nurse me more pureeaze!!

My brother picked choice (1). And his affection points towards Tama increased.

“I see... so if someone you don’t like tries to interact with you or nurses you, you can just pick the coldest replies and your affection points for each other won’t go up by much... also, option three is seriously screwed in the head!”

Kagami seemed shaken, but then began to whisper.

“This is troubling... considering sensei’s personality, no matter what anybody does to him he’ll never pick the cruel response... and in the end, he’ll marry the person who he has the highest affection points for. So only one of us can marry sensei... well, it’s not like I care though.”

“G-Getting married to Paparin...?”

It seemed Tama finally had found the time to listen to what her sisters were saying. Picking up the word “marriage” with her sharp ears, she began to fidget around and sway her body back and forth.

“Ehehe...”

I didn’t know what she was imagining, but her face was now bright red.

“I-In that case, Tama... is going to try her best too! ... But Paparin is dead, so Tama doesn’t know what to do... for now Tama just wants to bring him back to life.”

“If that’s what you want, Tama, pick up that item over there.”

“This?”

Tama followed Kagami’s advice (?), and picked up the bottle with the skull-and-crossbones on it.

“Take that and sprinkle it all over sensei.”

“Okay!”

Splash!

Tama has splashed extremely thick *strong acid* on you.

Your entire body is hideously burned and you collapse. How do you respond?

(1) Everyone makes mistakes sometimes. Don’t worry about it, Tama-san.

(2) JA*#&@K*@Q!?!

(3) Hah hah hah... more... splash more on me!

“The choices are now so sad! Kagami-nee tricked Tama?!”

“Whatever could you mean?”

After that, Tama continued to be tricked by Kagami, pouring ice water over my brother, rubbing mustard into his wounds, hitting him with the whip... My brother was picking the nicest responses in return, but since Tama was inflicting what would normally be fatal wounds on him, his affection points for her couldn't be getting too high.

And after a while of that, Tama's time ran out.

“Well then, seems like it's my turn next.”

“Hmph! Women are so cruel!”

Kagami raised her hand, while Tama drank a juice box next to her with tears streaming from her eyes.

“I am a vet... which means I'm in a medical profession, and so all the parameters necessary to heal others should be quite high in my character. I also have the requisite knowledge, so...”

Kagami used a healing charm to resurrect my brother, and then healed him perfectly with blood transfusions and medicine.

My brother's coloring returned, and his body which had been destroyed by Tama went back to normal.

Kamiami: Ohh, what tremendous skill. Kagami-san, you saved me.

My brother's affection points went up insanely high. To something like 70.

My brother was finally able to sit up in bed, and Kagami went over to him. She put a hand on her forehead, taking his temperature.

"If you ever feel sick, just let me know. Fufu, you sure slept for a long time, sleepyhead sensei..."

Tsurugi: You're way more clever than I expected, aren't you?! Acting innocent like that...!!

Tsurugi yelled at Kagami as Kagami steadily earned more and more affection points.

"Say whatever you want. I-It's not like I want to raise sensei's affection points and marry him or anything.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

One of our companions was not able to battle anymore, and even though I'm a healer I haven't been able to do much until now, so I thought I would just try here ... right~~ ☆?"

Tsurugi: "right~~ ☆?" my ass! Dammit, you' re always so emotionless that when you act so kind towards a weak person like this it feels really moe moe! Ugh, Kagami, you' re *my* wife!

"No, I'm your sister..."

Tsurugi got excited and hugged her little sister, while Kagami seemed a bit at a loss and tried to shove her older sister off.

"Ah, my time is up."

Kagami was in the process of cutting an apple for my brother and feeding him when her time ran out. Her affection points were around 300... (by the way, Tama's affection points were at around negative 100).

Tsurugi: Alrighty.

Tsurugi's character on screen raised her hand high.

Tsurugi: The star player has arrived! My turn!

“Eh? But sensei’s character has already been revived and is at full health now...”

Tsurugi: Shut up! I’m the main heroine here! You can’t just go for the ending with the convenient girl who’s only nice to you when you’re weak! Also, since the nurse’s office is usually so empty and has a bed, it’s one of the two best spots for pervy scenes to happen! The other one being the gym equipment room! You understand what I’m trying to say?!

“This is all neesan ever thinks about...”

Kagami looked bewildered as her older sister’s character didn’t seem to be able to hold it in anymore and began to strip off her biker’s jacket.

“What in the world are you doing?!”

As expected, Tsurugi ignored her sister’s attempts to stop her, and jumped onto the bed in her birthday suit.

Tsurugi: Don’t interfere, Kagami! I’m going to get his affection points up and I’m going to make everyone my wife and gate guard-chan and Tsukuyomi and my little sisters are all going to snuggle up to me and we’re going to live in happiness and surge right for a harem ending! Tsukuyomi, you strip too!

Kamiyomi’s “old rag” has been removed from his equipment list!

“Why is it so easy in this game to take people’s clothes off?! Stop, neesan, there are children present! Aghh... t-this is... in a place like that...”

“I’m scaaaared, I’m scaaaared. Tsurugi-nee and Paparin are naked and they’re doing something weiiird...”

“Stop traumatizing elementary schoolers!”

Kagami panicked and covered Tama’s eyes with her hands in real life.

And I was at the limit of my patience.

-

Sasamisan: WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING TO ONIICHAN?!?!?!?

-

The nurse’s office fell into silence.

Even Tsurugi who was acting completely out of bounds... even my brother who was getting his affection points for Tsurugi raised forcefully and yet didn’t seem to be sad about that at all and was squirming around asking for more (resist more dammit)... even the panicking Kagami, even the sobbing Tama... everyone simultaneously lost their ability to speak.

“Y-You are...!!”

Tsurugi covered herself with the bedsheets and cocked her head to the side in puzzlement.

“Don’t tell me... Sasami?!”

In the real world, Tsurugi turned and looked at me, and I gave a nod back.

In order to best be able to offer support or interference if something happened, I had worked hard to transport my character from far away to “Takamagahara Academy.”

My entire body was decorated with rare Divine Beasts Equipment, and I had a huge magical weapon on my back. I walked over to the others, my metallic armored boots making clinking noises as I walked.

Tsurugi: I see, so you also started playing Yamata no Orochi SNS... also, your HP and SP are really high...

“.....”

I couldn’t explain that very easily, so I decided to just ignore it.

I began to quickly type a message.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Sasamisan: I thought I would just stay quiet and watch... but even if we're in a game, when a family member is getting violated I'm going to stop it at all costs...!

All of this would have been embarrassing to say out loud, so I typed it all.

Sasamisan: And oniichan, show a bit more resistance! You idiot! Pervert! Hmph, just go ahead and fall in love with a game character and get married or whatever! I don't care at all! That's all I came to say, you damn horny f(inappropriate language deleted)!!

"S-Sasami-san... Sasami-san is in the game...!! And she's being a cute tsundere and abusing me... ahh, ahhhh...!!"

Kamiami's affection points towards Sasamisan have increased by 500!

Five hundred?! It's not like we were doing a minigame, and we weren't even companions so why the hell did his affection points go up?! Ugyah, don't come towards me don't hug me you're still completely naked gyahhhh it's a game but this feels so disgusting aghhhhh don't get any closer you damn pervert pervert exhibitionist!!

"Hooray! Now I can play this game together with Sasami-san!! I welcome the opportunity... let's go on an adventure in this world together and then get married and make a happy family together! It's a game, so it doesn't matter if we're brother and sister, right?! Ufufufu~~!"

Kamiomi has sent Sasami-san a “companion” request. Do you accept?

(1)Accept.

(2)Refuse.

“Option two! Option two dammit! I refuse! I refuse from now until the end of time! Who the hell wants to do that with her brother?!”

You were unable to refuse.

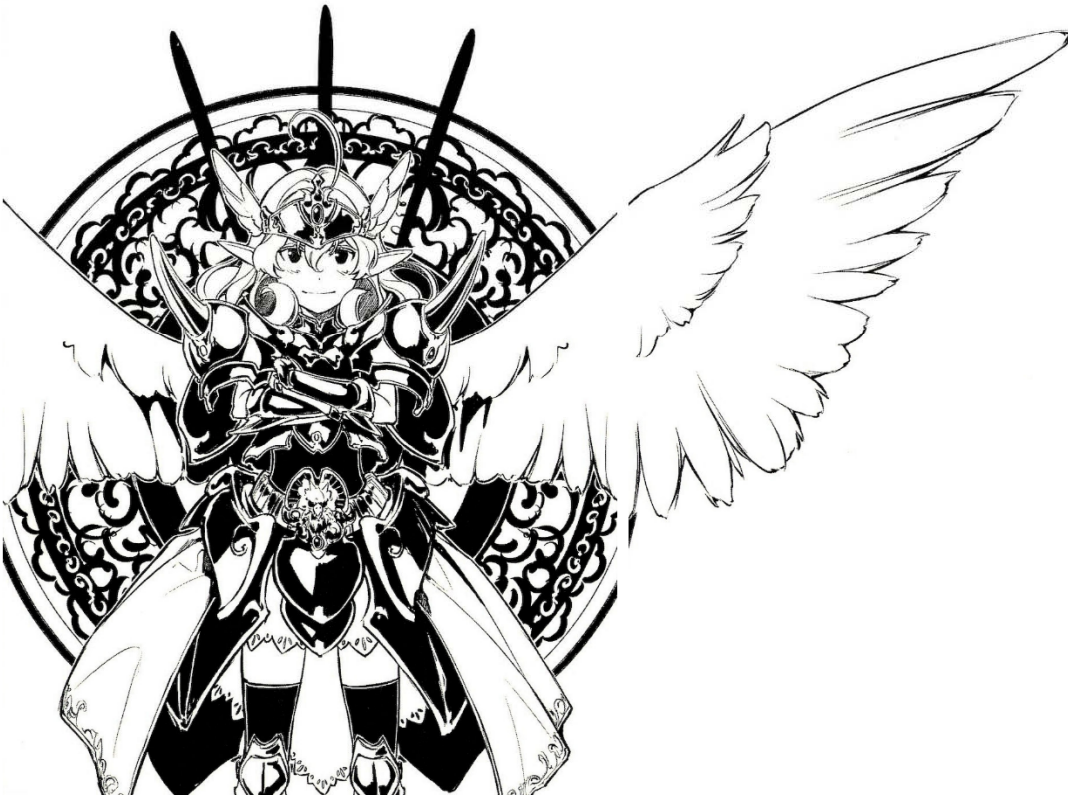
You and Kamiomi have become companions!

“Why the hell?!”

As I stood there completely flustered, Tsurugi looked at me...

“.....”

And with a serious expression, she fell into thought as if she had just realized something.



Chapter 12: Yamata no Orochi, Electronic World

We walked through the hallways of Takamagahara Academy.

After all that fuss in the nurse's office over reviving and healing my brother, the Yagami sisters, my brother, and I all became companions and headed for their classroom.

Having finished the quest, they had to go back to receive their reward from the homeroom teacher.

Also, because they had slipped out of class mid-lecture, they had to stay and listen to all the information that they hadn't been able to hear before.

I wasn't a new student though, so it's not like I had to go with them, but...

Tsurugi: So, I mean...

Tsurugi seemed quite interested as she clicked on me and checked my parameter and equipment details.

Tsurugi: You haven't been coming to school, and you've just been playing Yamata no Orochi SNS this entire time...

"Nah, it's not like I've *just* been doing this... I also order things online, read manga, keep up with net idol blogs..."

Tsurugi: I kind of want to ask you more about that last one, but... you're a student, so studying should be your top priority, right? You should be doing things like this in just your spare time.

"It's precisely because I didn't want to hear this lecture that I didn't want other people to know I played this game..."

Also, considering Tsurugi played games in the middle of work, getting lectured by her just pissed me off.

And these girls were all trying to do weird things to my brother... I had tried so hard to hide myself but in the end I had to reveal myself.

In retrospect, it would have been much faster if I had just punched these girls out in the real world. Oh well... hindsight is 20/20.

I let out a sigh and asked a question somewhat disinterestedly.

“But from what you said, it sounds like there are a lot of other students who haven’t been to school because they’ve been obsessed with Yamata no Orochi SNS?”

“Funyaa.”

Kagami, who even in the game looked pretty sleepy, slowly responded.

“I hacked... investigated the company that manages Yamata no Orochi SNS, and found that right now, all of the people in my class who are absent are absent because of this game. There are around ten of them. It is clearly abnormal for so many people to be absent for the same reason.”

“Kagami, you can hack...?”

“It seems I do have such a ‘function.’ But I cannot control these functions willfully, so I’m not too sure. That is why I am here investigating Yamata no Orochi SNS with everyone right now.”

Tsurugi: It would’ve been a huge time-saver if Kagami could just have found everything out, but she has fairly weak resistance towards irregularities. And this might be a fairly dangerous alteration, so I didn’t want her to deal with it alone.

Maybe Tsurugi was trying to replenish her blood sugar levels, but she was munching on a piece of ningyoyaki¹.

Tsurugi: Well, Sasami is a shut-in so her reasons might be a bit special... but I’m still not convinced on everyone else. This Yamata no Orochi SNS is pretty fun, but it’s not so amazing as to get a bunch of kids to develop an addiction to it. To get a dozen people to sacrifice their futures for it... that is definitely abnormal.

“So you’re saying... somebody brainwashed the students, or made Yamata no Orochi SNS arbitrarily addictive and people couldn’t stop playing it... or something?”

I said that as if it had nothing to do with me, but maybe... maybe I too...

¹ A pastry made in the shape of a person. Ningyo means “doll.”

If all these vast amounts of time I had already sunk into Yamata no Orochi were because somebody else had forced me, then I wouldn't be very happy.

"I looked into it a bit."

As I watched my brother and the others making a racket, I found the game homepage and read some of the news out loud.

"Looks like it's not just our school. The entire country is obsessed with Yamata no Orochi SNS and the number of people who have shut themselves at home to play is growing. Looks like it's become a serious social problem... among the three-hundred-thousand users, maybe a few thousand... or upwards to ten thousand users are like that."

Tsurugi: Ten thousand hikikomori...

This news seemed to put Tsurugi on her guard.

Tsurugi: Brainwashing that many people, stealing their life force... or maybe manipulating their consciousness and controlling them like puppets... the irregularity which has nested itself in Yamata no Orochi SNS might be more powerful than we expected. And it also seems to be a glutton on top of that. If we just leave it alone then the damages will just get worse and worse...

“It seems beyond the shadow of a doubt that there are hostile evil gods involved in Yamata no Orochi SNS...”

Kagami got serious and added her own thoughts in.

“This can’t be normal. However, we don’t know what the culprit’s goals are. Capturing such a large number of people, saving up power... what exactly could he possibly want? Stealing life force from people is just a ‘means,’ and we have to ask ourselves what ‘ends’ this culprit will use all that power for. But whatever has taken nest in Yamata no Orochi SNS is not making any obvious moves...”

Tsurugi: That’s true. Right now, it’s like whoever is behind this is just storing up electrical power. Take electric stoves or refrigerators... you have to use the electric power for something before it actually produces something useful. But if you’re just talking about pure electric power, which hasn’t been used for anything... all you can do then is pointlessly electrocute people.

Tsurugi sounded annoyed as she mumbled.

Tsurugi: This time, we can’t see who our enemy is at all... and we don’t know what he’s after. All he’s doing is gathering up people and sucking power from them. That’s all. Even when clear threats like us invade the game, he’s pretty much left us alone until now... and I don’t think he’s underestimating us, but rather he’s just really operating automatically. He’s acting like a computer program, or some NPC... it really feels like we’re not fighting against someone with a human will, but rather just with enemies that are just programmed into the game.

“Tsurugi-nee.”

Tama had been silent all this while, but was now mumbling with a serious look on her face.

“Tama has an emergency situation...”

Tsurugi: ... What’s wrong?

Tsurugi responded immediately.

Tsurugi: What did you find to, Tama? Anything is fine, since we have so little information right now... so don’t hold back and let your sister know anything you’re thinking about.

“Ahh... no...”

Tama flushed bright red and squirmed around uncomfortably.

“T-Tama can’t hold it anymore...”

Tsurugi: Wow, what an emergency!

She just wanted to go to the bathroom.

It was wrong of us to have had expected more of her.

Tsurugi: You should've gone before we started the game... you suddenly sounded so serious so I thought something had happened.

"Hmph! Sorry!"

Tama was trembling as she stood up and began pulling on Tsurugi's white lab coat.

"T-T-Tsurugi-nee... c-come with Tama..."

Tsurugi: You know, you're already an elementary schooler, so can't you just go to the bathroom by yourself? Oneechan is a bit busy thinking about things right now.

"It's a sad truth..."

Tama put on a somber expression as she mumbled.

"But humanity has yet to reach that stage."

Tsurugi: I have no idea what you're talking about. Ugh, fine, I guess there's no other choice.

Tsurugi also liked to take care of her sisters, so she stood up and began to walk out of the room while holding Tama's hand.

Tsurugi: Alright, I'm going to go with her... sorry! Tama and I are going to be out of the game for a bit, so just move forward by yourselves! We'll meet up somewhere later!

"Funya."

Kagami looked bewildered.

"Well, we just have to go back to the classroom... and it looks like we're not going to be attacked by any delinquents anymore, so maybe we'll be fine by ourselves."

"Well, if it comes down to it I can fight."

I casually accepted that task. I don't mean to brag, but my character was super strong, and except for the enemies in Valhalla I could deal easily with most other enemies single-handedly.

"Got it. I'll leave it to you then."

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Tsurugi finally spoke again with her real voice and led a sniffling Tama out of the room.

“Alright, let’s go. By the way, Tama, what do you do when you need to go to the bathroom at school?”

“Umm, Tama’s classmate Nozomi-chan goes with her, or Tama goes with sensei...”

“You know, Nozomi-chan is fine and all, but isn’t your teacher a single man? Is that seriously okay?”

I listened to them talk about stuff like that as they left the room.

“Hey, the bathroom is on the first floor!”

I yelled that at them before returning to the game.

We left the now frozen Tsurugi and Tama on screen behind, and the three of us headed for the classroom.

Well, we were at school, so it shouldn’t be dangerous to just leave them there.

“.....”

“.....”

“.....”

However, I just noticed it, but the three of us left couldn't strike up a conversation.

Kagami didn't talk much usually, and I was pretty bad when it came to communication. And my brother was just a perv (for a while, he's been staring entranced at my character's profile, and was so busy taking screenshots that he didn't have time to talk).

This was awkward.....

I was having a hard time composing myself, but for now we had arrived at the classroom so I opened the door.

“Eh...?”

I was at a loss for words.

Kagami's classroom... the classroom for class 47 in the first year... was completely bathed in red.

The homeroom teacher, the dozens of students... they had all been mercilessly massacred...

"W-What... is this...?"

I was dumbfounded, and completely rooted to the spot.

Kagami and my brother seemed shocked as well.

In this somewhat narrow classroom, the people who had been enjoying school life until just a while ago were now collapsed into piles of blood.

We were presented with a grotesque mountain of corpses, so vivid that it was hard to think this could be in a game.

I had never seen anything like this before.

I felt like I was standing in the middle of a terrorist attack.

It looked like something had exploded.

One person had been reduced to a pile of raw meat, one person had both his arms blown off, one person had his skull cracked open and its contents were spilling out, one person had been burned completely black... this was not a scene I've ever seen in a fantasy game, but a bizarre reproduction of a battlefield during a bloody war.

"What happened?! Why is everyone dead?!"

I was completely shaken and I screamed.

This cannot have happened.

Yamata no Orochi SNS was an SNS system that was turned into a fun game. It was a game that offered a feeling of refreshment and stress relief, a game which gave you a chance to communicate with others a bit and also feel like you've accomplished something... it was a wonderful way to escape from a dull reality into a space that was much, much more comfortable.

What the hell was this?

What was it?

As I stood there completely shocked, I saw the students turn into particles of light and vanish.

Their corpses didn't remain... they couldn't be revived ever again, and they were completely dead. They had been "terminated."

They had been massacred and now no longer held the right to interact with this world.

And that wasn't all.

Usually, the particles of light would just float around for a little bit before disappearing, but for some reason this time they just hung around like insects, and then flew outside the window leaving a slight trail behind them.

It was almost as if they were being drawn somewhere.

"Sasami-san... what is that?"

My brother looked in the direction the particles of light had gone, and sounded a bit worried.

On the other side of the window, there was...

The wide schoolyard, and the castle town beyond that were being destroyed...

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

Destroyed by a bizarre, huge army that stretched out all the way to the horizon.

It was an army of monsters. Demons, warriors with pig heads, sinister-looking giants, dragons, succubi, krakens, goblins, slimes... and various others.

“It’s the demon king’s army... look, oniichan! Kagami, you too!”

I desperately pointed to a spot in the back of the monster army.

Towering back there was a huge monster.

A monster so big that you might mistake it as a building.

But that was definitely a living creature.

A dragon with eight heads.

That was the only way you could describe this ultimate being.

His huge tree-trunk necks majestically waved about, and his flame-like tongues came in and out of view as he got closer and closer.

He was on my computer screen, but I could sense so much pressure from him that I almost felt like he would fly into my room and bite into my throat.

“It’s Yamata no Orochi...”

I’ve seen this creature before.

I’ve seen him displayed at the top of the Yamata no Orochi SNS homepage.

“The demon king, the absolute being. The tyrant once created by the coming together of many gods who had created this world, and who had once tried to destroy everything... they said he might be revived one day, but this is impossible. If he appears then the game ends... because he’s supposed to be the last boss...”

In Yamato no Orochi SNS, the entire point of training adventurers was to someday defeat the demon king Yamata no Orochi when he revived.

But that was precisely why he could never be revived.

If Yamata no Orochi appears, then everyone... the students, the teachers, the graduates... everyone would have to fight him.

And if he gets defeated, then *the story would end there.*

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

When the story ended in a fictional world, it was the same as that fictional world itself coming to an end.

It meant that this comfortable paradise I had escaped so often to would be no more.

“Kyahh?!”

Kagami screamed.

The demon king’s army was now bombarding us.

The school walls were smashed, and the windows all shattered.

At the same time, the monsters who were coming ever closer began to rush into the classroom.

The students were being massacred, whether by that bombardment or by getting attacked by monsters.

I could almost feel it happening.

“Yamata no Orochi...? That huge thing back there?”

Kagami hurriedly tried to distance herself from the monsters flowing in, and her expression changed.

“I can feel a strong power... I can sense that he is like us, someone who associates with the gods... I suppose that our enemy has suddenly revealed himself. What an amazing divinity... this goes beyond my expectations.”

“That’s the enemy...? Of all things, he’s living inside this world’s most powerful monster...?”

I blinked in astonishment, but this was not the time for that.

Something bizarre happened in the next moment.

“It’s like watching a manga series getting a premature end... uhyahh?!”

Kagami had been muttering random tactless things... but she suddenly toppled over in the real world.

She had been sitting on her knees up until now, but both her legs suddenly sprung straight up.

And then, her hand which was placed on her mouse to control her character... that hand was suddenly sucked into that mouse. It was almost as if an invisible hole had opened, and her hand had fallen into that hole.

“W-What in the world is... kyaahh?!”

Soon, her entire body had disappeared, and I felt myself beginning to sink into panic.

“Kagami?!”

Kagami: O-Ow ow ow... h-huh?

At that point, I realized the horrible truth.

The Kagami inside the screen was sitting on the floor, *almost as if she had fallen in from somewhere.*

And whatever she said was now displayed in text on the screen, even though up until now she had been talking out loud.

I started typing, a bad feeling beginning to creep into me.

Sasamisan: Umm, Kagami, don't tell me...

Inside the screen, Kagami blinked, looking strangely lifelike.

Kagami: T-This place... could this be... hyah?!

Suddenly, the monsters swarmed around her, and Kagami desperately tried to run away.

It seemed that she had been sucked into the game.

“Not good! Oniichan! We're probably going to-“

I couldn't finish that sentence.

I was attacked by a violent pulling on the fingers I was using to type on the keyboard. And then, like Alice in Wonderland, I felt my entire world turn upside down.

Chapter 13: The Hikikomori Gods

I could feel through my skin that the air had changed.

The smells around me had also changed. Instead of the familiar smell of my room, I could now discern the scent of blood and gunpowder.

When I came to, I found myself in the exact center of a devastated classroom.

“.....!!”

I touched my own face and stood there in pure shock.

It was easy to explain what exactly had happened.

We had all been sucked into the game world.

“S-Sasami-san!”

My brother and Kagami both desperately tried to reach me.

I was surrounded on all sides by monsters.

I didn't have time to think, but in my daze just swung the Divine Beast Sword I had in my hand.

I was pretty weak in real life so I had never swung a sword before, but my body was surprisingly nimble.

Soon, all the monsters around me had been knocked down, and they had disappeared.

"Ohh, you're quite strong."

Kagami seemed eternally calm even in a situation like this, and I looked to her with tear-stricken eyes.

"W-What happened?!"

"Exactly what it looks like."

It honestly annoyed me how calm Kagami could be as she walked around opening up the treasure boxes and gold dropped by the fallen monsters. Was there a place in the universe where she would actually be shaken?

“It seems that somehow, we’ve been sucked into the game world. We were most likely hypnotized by what was displayed on the computer screen, and only our spirits were sucked in... I cannot seem to use any of my divine powers here, and none of the abilities my body should be equipped with seem to be working. We are most likely in a situation comparable to dreaming.”

“Dreaming? This is a dream?”

And yet, the air I was breathing in and the feeling of cutting the monsters down all seemed way too real...

But most importantly, I had no idea what was going on.

“Why is all this... what’s going to happen to us?”

“Well...”

Kagami walked to the wall that was now lined with broken glass and vacantly gazed at the huge evil army, as well as the monster at the center of that army, Yamata no Orochi.

“Shouldn’t you be asking that to Mr. Hostile over there?”

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

The rumble of the earth and ferocious roars pierced my ears as a war unfolded outside.

The academy students and teachers... no, all the guardians from the entire world who had been studying and honing their skills for this very moment had gathered together and were battling against the demon king and his army.

There were also faces I recognized, like that cat-eared headmaster.

Lightning struck down while holy lights evaporated monster after monster. Swords and spears whirled through the air.

However, the monsters just kept coming and coming without an end in sight.

Everyone was fighting desperately, but our numbers were limited... guardians fell one after another.

They were broken into little pieces and then terminated.

It was hard to watch this cruel scene of war and carnage.

The cat-eared headmaster was heroically twirling around with her iron wires when Yamata no Orochi caught sight of her.

“Nyah?! What are you doing nyah, let me go nyah!”

The Yamata no Orochi’s long tongue wrapped around the headmaster’s limbs and lifted her into the air.

“D-Don’t worry all, just keep on fighting nyah! Never give up, and I’m sure-“

Like that, the demon king clamped down on the headmaster with his jaw, and a burst of blood flew tragically through the air.

Her body was torn apart from the middle, and this cute young girl with cat ears was bisected in midair and terminated.

Recoiling at this gruesome sight, the morale of the Academy forces collapsed.

Even the strongest warriors from Valhalla had come to join the fray, but the enemies were numberless, and Yamata no Orochi himself was just too strong.

Every time one of his eight heads moved, another guardian met his end in a spray of blood.

It was like watching the God of Ends destroying everything.

“Can’t do this... he’s too strong...”

I groaned.

“This is like gambling... you can’t win if the casino is rigging the cards. This Yamata no Orochi is one of the gods, right? So through an alteration, he’s rewritten the rules of this world, and has made it so no player can win against him... we can’t do anything here.”

“That’s what it seems like.”

Kagami pondered the situation as we watched the player getting overrun.

“Normal players would get wiped out immediately. Even for us, this may be dangerous. I’ve tried my utmost to transfer the abilities and divine rights possessed by my real body into the game world, but this Yamata no Orochi’s divinity is just too high... as long as he’s obstructing me, I will not be able to move those divine rights into this game...”

“W-What about oniichan?”

I had some hope in my brother, but Kagami shook her head.

“That’s no good. Sensei doesn’t know how to use the ‘supernatural powers’ that come with having a god’s power. Having a bullet is pointless if you don’t have the gun... and our enemy has a divinity comparable to that of the Supreme God... And even if we properly channeled his powers and tried to defeat this enemy, if our opponent properly concentrated and countered our efforts, I do not think we would be able to easily deal with him.”

“I wish I could properly channel oniichan’s powers...”

I did have these “supernatural powers.”

I knew how to use these divine powers, and use them well.

“But I barely have any divinity right now... and I can’t transfer my spiritual powers from my real self to my game self... so I can’t channel and control oniichan’s powers...”

My rather twisted relationship with my brother was backfiring on us.

“But I do believe I’ve deduced what the aim of this Yamata no Orochi is.”

Kagami glared up at the sky, almost as if she was trying to re-establish a connection with her real body.

“When I was playing this Yamata no Orochi SNS, I was flooded with quite a peculiar sensation. It almost felt like I was breaking apart, that I was forgetting my physical body and completely entering the game world. So this is an example of *emotional transfer*... when we play the game, we forget about our own bodies, and end up completely becoming our game personas.”

Kagami seemed irritated and brushed her hair up with a hand.

“And then, using that moment when we forget ourselves, using that gap, the Yamata no Orochi forcibly separates our bodies from our psyches. Just as we are completely immersed in the game, we suddenly can no longer return to the real world... most likely, our real bodies now look like soulless corpses and are all that remain of us in that world...”

Kagami pointed at Yamata no Orochi and made a declaration.

“And then, that large deity over there traps the player’s psyches in the game world. The students can no longer go to school, and are stuck here in this game. They are devoured by the Yamata no Orochi, and their real bodies also become soulless corpses.”

So those students weren’t staying home because they had gotten addicted to a game and didn’t care about school anymore.

Those students, as well as the problematic hikikomori that had been popping up all over Japan because they were playing Yamata no Orochi SNS...

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

They weren't just trying to distance themselves from reality.

Rather, they probably just couldn't return to that reality anymore.

"In addition, the Yamata no Orochi defeats players while they're in the game, and by killing them, he reduces them to unconscious particles of light and takes them in. They thus fall under a deep, dreamless sleep, not even being able to think as they become just another part of the Yamata no Orochi."

Kagami then cocked her head to the side and seemed puzzled.

"But there is still something that I don't understand... and it is the fact that the Yamata no Orochi *is not doing anything more than that*. If he was a god with evil intentions, he wouldn't just leave the soulless corpses of the people alone. He could even manipulate their bodies and begin an invasion of the real world."

I felt a shiver run down my spine.

I imagined the sight of these husks of people becoming the Yamata no Orochi's pawns and moving around like zombies, attacking other people on the streets.

But... such a thing had not happened yet in the real world.

The Yamata no Orochi was fully satisfied with just stealing people's psyches.

Why?

Was this god devoid of ambition?

But if that's true, why in the first place was he doing evil things like devouring people here?

He was a baffling monstrosity, and I couldn't make heads nor tails of what he was truly after.

"He's almost behaving like the Yamata no Orochi of legend... just desiring more and more sacrifices and devouring them greedily, and while he has a lot of power, he never does anything more than that. It's a mystery. If he has that much power, he should be able to make the real world into his own kingdom.

-

"That's 'cuz he isn't interested in the real world at all."

-

A small voice suddenly echoed through the room.

@@@@@

When I heard that voice, I turned around and saw the eldest and youngest Yagami sisters standing behind me.

It seemed they had returned from the bathroom.

No, wait, this was the game world.

Does this mean... they had also gotten trapped here?!

“Hey there, don’t worry. We’ve entered this world of our own free will.”

Tsurugi was wearing her biker’s jacket, and she muttered that with a bored expression on her face.

“You may think Yamata no Orochi’s divinity is high, but it’s not as high as Tama’s, and he also isn’t smart enough to do in someone with as much experience as me. So that’s why he saw a lucky chance when both Tama and I left the room and sprung this trap.”

There was no real hint of danger in Tsurugi’s voice.

“He really is just like a machine... that monster is. He just eats whatever he can eat, and absorbs whatever he can catch. That’s all he does. He’s really nothing more than an animal... we seriously overthought this. This Yamata no Orochi is not a high-level enough being to be able to be plotting something wicked.”

Tsurugi crossed her arms and looked straight at the demon king.

“The only thing he cares about is the preservation of this world. This Yamata no Orochi SNS world, I mean. The only thought in that head of his is ‘I want this world to continue forever.’ He couldn’t care less about the real world, but just wants to protect his own world...”

“How can you say that so confidently?”

Tsurugi threw back a quick response at Kagami’s question.

“Have you not realized it? That Yamata no Orochi is an ally of the Supreme God, just like us. You can smell it on him. And of course, this high level of divinity can only come from someone like that. So this is just a deduction... but it is most likely the right one.”

And then, she looked at me.

Even though I was just a bystander here.

“Sasami, you gave life to that monster without knowing it when you still had the power of the Supreme God within you. He is a new god that was created... or rather, was transformed into that shape, by your desires, and is ultimately a result of an alteration of this world which those desires led to... ”

“M-Me...?”

Certainly, in the past I had the power of the Supreme God.

So back then...

Back then, when I had tried so, so hard, only to be tired out and end up living days filled with grief and sorrow...

"I checked your character's profile, and I knew. You have thousands of hours logged on this game. Even if you played for two hours a day, that would be a thousand days. Nearly three years. Three years ago, you weren't living as you do now, right? In other words... you've been playing Yamata no Orochi SNS since the time you possessed the power of the Supreme God, yes?"

Yes.

At that shrine, back with my real family, I was trying my best as the miko endowed with the power of the Supreme God.

As I endured the hell of the tortures thrust upon me, I began to use the computer that had been randomly given to me as a way to escape from reality.

And within that computer I found a world without limits.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

That game taught me about the huge, free, bustling world outside, outside of that isolated shrine where even the flow of time seemed to stagnate. Eventually, I would be able to escape from that place precisely because I had learned about the outside.

But it was difficult to muster up the courage to escape, and I found myself indulging in Yamata no Orochi SNS.

I became immersed, finding my “second life,” and I had my fill of adventures in that alternate world.

At that point, I probably made a wish.

A wish that this fantasy world of swords and magic, this paradise which gave me relief from a cruel reality... that this place would continue on forever.

And in order to grant that wish, this world was altered.

And the Yamata no Orochi was born.

“I see...”

You could even say I was moved.

“He protected this world for me all this time...”

I had desperately, desperately tried so hard, and grit my teeth for so long.

In order to make sure the power of the Supreme God was being used correctly for the sake of mankind, I had been exposed to the harshest training, and my freedom had been robbed from me.

I found myself longing for this other world. I found myself falling in love with this fantasy.

This world had offered a young child a chance to escape.

At that time, did I fall deeply entranced by that kind fantasy and want desperately to protect it?

Did that desire turn into the Yamata no Orochi, turn into a god, and was that god still fighting to preserve this world to this day?

I had lost the power of the Supreme God, and turned into just another normal, powerless, boring, unmotivated girl... with that, this Yamata no Orochi I had created also fell apart and grew weak.

But he still trapped the people who were enjoying this Yamata no Orochi SNS, absorbed them and drew strength from them... he earnestly continued trying to keep my dream alive.

Yamata no Orochi.

The monster I had given life to.

A hikikomori god, and the protector of this kind escape from reality.

“You understand, don’t you?”

Tsurugi softly spoke to me as tears streamed from my eyes.

“End it here. You’ve found a place you belong in the real world... so you don’t need to run to this one any longer . There is no point in sacrificing others in order to preserve this world. Tell him that. Tell this faithful dog, who has continued wagging his tail long after his master had forgotten him.”

“I got it.”

Thank you, Yamata no Orochi.

When I was weak and close to breaking, escaping reality was how I managed to keep living. And up until now, I didn't even know you were here, protecting the world which offered that escape.

I'm sorry.

And thank you so much for your hard work.

I'm alright now.

So...

"Tsurugi, is it possible to transfer my powers to me in this world?"

"Hm? Ah, yeah, unlike Kagami with her low divinity and you rather special siblings, Tama and I aren't weak enough to get done in by a machine like that. We can use our divine abilities all we want in this world, so with just a small alteration..."

Tsurugi took out a double-edged sword from a crimson bundle.

And then she swung it grandly upwards.

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

A crack ran through the world, and warm power overflow from that crack.

I waited for that power to envelop me, and then placed my hand on my brother's shoulder.

"S-Sasami-san?"

A bit shocked at how clueless my brother was, I decided that for the first time in a long while... I would try my best.

The Yamata no Orochi was a monster born in an age where I was trying hard.

So if I wanted to lay him to rest, then I had to try hard now as well.

"I command you in the name of Tsukuyomi Sasami."

I temporarily borrowed the power of the Supreme God which rested in my brother's body.

And then, like a god myself, I issued a high-handed command.

"Oh ye malevolent god... lay to rest."

Part 2: YAMATA NO OROCHI

I issued a command towards that huge Yamata no Orochi, who was waving his eight heads in the distance like a dog wagging his tail.

“Disperse, and melt into the world. Sleep.”

My order, the order of a person who used to command the highest divinity and who had created this Yamata no Orochi... my order pierced right through this faithful servant who had continued to loyally fulfill the wishes of my long past self for all this time.

My command might be rejected.

He had spent all this time helping me, and yet I hadn't even noticed his existence.

He might have been shocked, might have lost his affection towards me, and might not lend his ear to my command.

However.

“I'm okay now!”

I yelled.

Like those times long ago, I put all my effort into it.

“I’m living a pretty happy life now!”

So please, you too... you don’t have to try that hard anymore.

@@@@@

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.....

When I came to, I found myself in my usual small space surrounded by my computers. Apparently I had just been sleeping soundly, with my head on my computer desk. There was a blanket draped around my shoulders, and I found a note from my brother which read *When you wake up, please go properly sleep in your bed.*

I took a look at my computer screen which had been left on for all this time, and I saw a single window displayed.

Yamata no Orochi SNS is currently experiencing unknown problems, and has temporarily ceased operations.

We still have no estimate as to when these problems will be resolved.

We apologize for the inconvenience caused to our users.

“.....”

I looked around the room. I saw my computers lined up, all the floor cushions in their right places, and the Yagami sisters were nowhere to be found... it was almost like everything had been a dream.

But I remembered. I would never forget.

I shut off the power to my computer, and took a long stretch.

“Fuwaahh...”

I let out a yawn and went to sleep in my bed, as my brother had suggested.

Fortunately, it didn't take giving life to a monster that would protect a fantasy world to have sweet dreams.

Chapter 14: Tsukuyomi Sasami's Investigations (Part 2)

*****More about the hostiles.*****

The lower gods obey the higher gods. The Supreme God at the pinnacle of it all maintains this world, managing and controlling it, while the other gods define their own forms in accordance with those regulations. That was a summary of the way things were in this world, and that was also the subject of my last report.

In essence, this was like a Kingdom of Gods. The Supreme God was the ruler, while the normal gods were the normal citizens. However, as long as the gods possessed some semblance of human individuality (desires, emotions, self-consciousness, likes and dislikes, etc.), it would be impossible for everyone to live happily in this kingdom without any problems or stress whatsoever.

No matter how peaceful a kingdom was, there would be crime, and quarrels born over trivial things. There would be terrorists plotting to overthrow the government, and people who harbored dissatisfaction towards society. There might also be invaders from the outside. And when the Supreme God weakens, or when he becomes powerless like my brother, the kingdom appears foolish and those negative forces become a problem. Let's just call these forces "the hostiles."

There were those who even would defy the Supreme God (well, the difference in power was overwhelming, so it's not like they could win if they fought against the higher gods, but if they were really angry they could at least throw a few

punches), those who tried to restrain each other or fought amongst themselves... those who constantly tried to kick others down, those who just went on pointless rampages... they may be “gods,” but even the gods had different personalities, and there were incredibly stubborn ones who would fight back and cause trouble no matter how hard the Supreme God worked to manage them.

Most gods would obey when the Supreme God or those with high divinities like the Yagami Sisters ordered them to do something. However, the hostiles would be defiant no matter how strongly they were commanded, would go wild, and would fight back. Most of the gods who would try to hinder us or cause us harm belonged in this category of “hostiles.”

If I separated these hostiles into broad categories, those would be “evil gods,” “foreign enemies,” and “heretics.”

The evil gods were the so-called enemies of the state. They didn’t listen to what their rulers or other people with authority said, but just went wild trying to fulfill their own desires. They didn’t care about hierarchies, but fought back so they could do whatever they wanted. There were even those who had outrageous dreams of toppling the Supreme God and making themselves number one. At that point they went past just enemies of the state and were just terrorists.

But in most cases, the evil gods were not very strong. There weren’t many gods who had higher divinities than the Supreme God or the Yagami Sisters, so it was fairly difficult to lose to these evil gods. That’s why they often resorted to

underhanded tricks, but even those were usually just minor annoyances and weren't much to write home about.

But it's a bit strange to just lump all these gods into the single category of "evil gods." Even during that Valentine's Day Tragedy, Tsurugi had called the culprits "evil gods," but those were gods who had turned into chocolate in order to please the Supreme God Amaterasu. They were working for the Supreme God, and that is why they opposed the Yagami Sisters, and were considered evil gods by them. However, if you change your point of view, Tsurugi and her sisters were the ones who were opposing the wishes of the Supreme God, so in this case at least you could say *they* were the evil gods...

Well, in any case, we can just define "evil gods" as the gods in Japan who didn't pay attention to hierarchy and acted only out of self interest.

Moving along, these "foreign enemies" existed outside of Japan. Those entities almost never came over here, so I didn't know much about them... but foreign countries had their own religions, mythologies, and gods, and through those built their own individual cultures and spheres of influence . Thus, these gods were foreign.

And naturally, because these were foreign countries, these other gods did not obey the Supreme God Amaterasu, who only had influence in Japan. The "foreign enemies" were the gods amongst those foreign gods who poked their heads into Japan and acted under veil of secrecy.

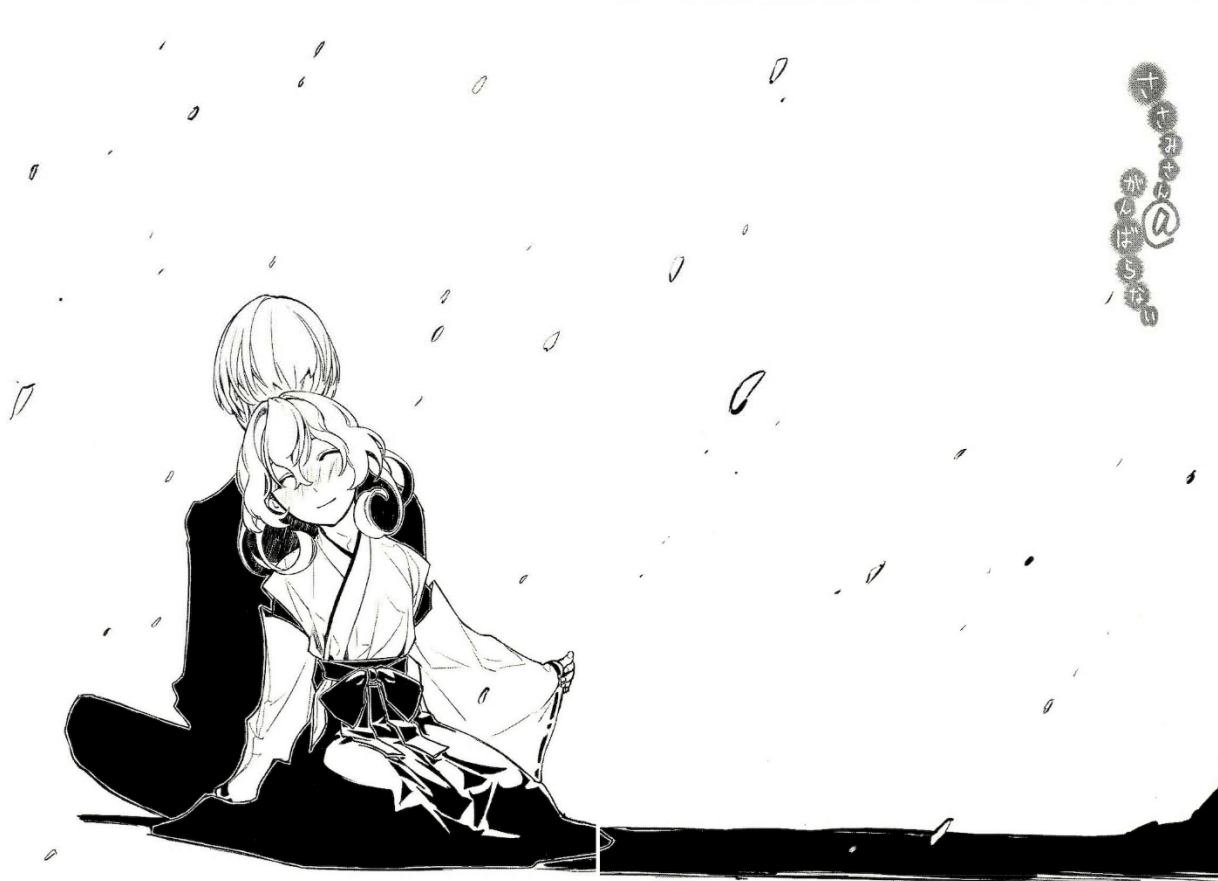
They were the very definition of invaders, but lately it seems that their actions almost never actually developed into a divine war between nations. However, they were definitely not entities we could ignore, and there was always the danger that they would see that an idiot like my brother was now the Supreme God reigning over Japan and would sense an opportunity to attack. We couldn't let our guards down. Well, although, it's not like they've been acting suspiciously nowadays...

Last, the "heretics" were wicked humans. When I say "human" though, these were special humans (although it's quite difficult to explain exactly how they were special) who could live with different principles and rules from the gods.

Psychic powers, sorcery, religion, rituals... they used various tools and procedures and sometimes were able to wield power that even exceeded that of the gods. And then, the humans who could use that power to actually influence the gods were worthy of fear and called "heretics."

A representative example would be our family. A long time ago, the Tsukuyomi Clan members were able to capture the Supreme God Amaterasu alive, and use her to build a splendid world meant for the humans. Ever since my brother and I had ran away from home, they had kept unusually quiet and it was a bit worrying... who knows what they could be planning for us in the near future?

I've been living a peaceful, unmotivated life for all this time, but I wonder how much longer that can last.



PART 3: NINIGI NO MIKOTO¹

Chapter 15: Expedition to Ame-no-Iwato (Front Half)²

Occasionally, I thought back to the past.

¹ The grandson of Amaterasu, who was sent down to earth to bring down three gifts (a sword, a jewel, and a mirror) to the Japanese emperor. These three gifts became the sign of the emperor's divine ancestry.

² The legendary "cave of the sun god." Most famous as the cave in which Amaterasu hid for a long time (thus plunging the world into darkness) before being lured out by her own reflection.

My clan lived in a remote corner of Kyushu³, in a shrine which passed down one single duty from generation to generation.

That duty was the sealing, management, and control of the Supreme God Amaterasu.

Yes, I came from a mysterious lineage that had somehow captured the Supreme God alive, and used that to maintain a world that was convenient for humans to live in.

We were an unsavory group of spiritualists who were pulling the strings from behind the curtains.

If there were gods residing in everything, then you could take that to mean that there were also gods living within the bodies of humans. The spiritual powers of my family came from turning that way of thinking into finding tools or skills with which we could harness divine powers.

Of course, the divinity of humans was not intrinsically high. In the end, we didn't amount to more than average-level creature gods.

But humans could train, exert immense effort, or just take in or consume more gods to heighten their own powers.

³ The southernmost island of Japan.

There were then the spiritualists who surpassed the rest, and who sought to punish the evil gods who threatened this world made for the comfort of humans. In order to preserve that world, they also warped reality through an alteration, so that most people didn't know of their existence, or just didn't believe in them.

In any case, ever since I was born I had been raised as one of those spiritualists.

I went through hellish, torturous trainings day after day, but I was content.

Because I was raised in a closed-off environment like the shrine, I was halfway brainwashed and grew up believing that we were forces of justice striving to protect the world.

Even though we were little more than rebels who had tricked the Supreme God into being captured alive, and were arbitrarily forcing the world into a shape that served us.

And so, shut in that prison, I focused every ounce of my strength on my training. But sometimes I couldn't take it anymore and managed to escape. The training I was put through to heighten my spiritual powers was incredibly taxing, and I was also just a little girl filled with curiosity about the world and humans outside.

Every time I escaped, it would raise a huge panic back home and I would get dreadfully scolded, but I didn't pay that any heed.

And then, after the shop I frequented for manga and games also set up an internet connection, my entire worldview crumbled into dust.

Through the network lines, I was able to travel from the ascetic, amusement-free environment of my village into the wide, chaotic world outside. Through reading blogs, I increased my awareness of the world.

And then, upon reading the homepage of a certain spiritualist, I suddenly was made aware of the truth... of the true identity of my clan.

It seemed that in order to preserve this world made for the comfort of humans, the power of the Supreme God was passed down from generation to generation from parent to offspring.

My particular family, those who took Tsukuyomi as a surname, was the clan tasked with that outrageous responsibility.

I was astonished, and also frightened.

To preserve the state of the world... that was just way too monumental of a task.

Every piece of training I had gone through up to this point was to prepare myself for that task.

It was all so when the Supreme God was sealed in my body, I would be able to control those powers and prevent them from running wild.

The next year, my mother, who was still young, passed away.

The power of the Supreme God was then passed down to me, who had been raised from birth as a shrine priestess, and although much celebration was had, this event marked the beginning of true Hell for me.

@@@@@

I often had nightmares about my past.

“Hnn.....”

I woke up from a listless sleep and began to move around under my covers.

Spring was still far off... and the nights were terribly cold, so I curled up inside my futon.

When I checked the clock next to my pillow, I saw that it was six in the evening.

After I had lived a while as a hikikomori, I found myself prone to insomnia, and my biological clock had also been completely thrown off.

And even if I woke up, it's not like there was much to do.

It was also pretty cold, so maybe I should sleep for a bit longer.

Yawnnnnnnn...

I yawned, thinking sweet things like *Yeah, that's a great idea. Sleep a bit longer.* So I began to drift off again, when...

"Hm?"

I suddenly noticed something.

When I tried to sleep on my front side, I noticed that something felt off near my chest.

It didn't hurt or itch or anything... it just felt like there was something intruding there.

It's not like my breasts were big enough to bother me when I tried to sleep, so maybe there was some stuffed animal stuck there or something...

A bit irritated, I turned over and then felt around on top of my bed with my hand, looking for the culprit.

But there was nothing there.

I suddenly got a bad feeling about all this, and touched the suspicious area on my chest with a finger.

Something felt strange.

“Wha-“

I lost any and all will to sleep, and flew up from my bed in a panic.

I turned on the room's lights with a remote control, and told myself to calm down.

I tried my best to not look down at my chest but headed for the wash basin that was set in my room.

I washed my face to wake myself up a bit, and then once again took a look at myself.

There was a strange bulge coming out of my body.

“What the hell is this...?”

The bulge originated near the base of my collarbone.

It was big enough to push up against the fabric of my pajamas, as if asserting its own existence.

And it also just didn’t seem natural.

The bulge was uneven, and it was hard for me to imagine what could be lying beneath it.

Now that I thought about it, when I got into the bathtub last night, there was already a small bump forming around here...

It was small enough that I thought it was just a pimple or something... so I had left it alone.

Did that thing suddenly grow big?

“What is this... why is it so swollen already? This... isn’t cancer is it? A tumor or something? I-If this is some weird disease, what am I going to do...?”

Almost near tears, I began to unfasten the buttons on my pajamas, one by one.

I was scared to check exactly what this thing was, but it was far more scary to just leave it be and continue not knowing what was going on.

I steeled myself and exposed the top half of my body.

And what appeared there completely blew my expectations to bits.

“Eh...?”

-

It was someone’s hand.

-

Someone’s hand was extending from the wrist, out of my chest.

It looked like a right hand... It was a slender hand which was pale to its fingertips, and the nails were well groomed.

This was probably a girl's hand. Although...

That hand sure did seem familiar...

To test something out, I took my own right hand and put it right next to the hand sticking out from my chest.

They looked exactly the same. From the length of the nails from the positions of the moles.

"This is my hand...? What is going on...?"

"Sasami-saaaaan~~."

As my face paled and I began to shake, I heard a carefree voice calling out to me.

It was my brother.

"It's dinner tiime~~. Are you awake~~? If you're not awake your oniichan can come and give you a little kiss like sleeping beauty ufu ufufufufu~~"

My brother was spouting some random nonsense, but at a time like this I felt I could trust this hentai to help me.

With my face still pale, I rushed to the door of my room and opened it.

“Oniichan!”

“Uwah, you surprised me!”

It was rare for me to go and open the door (my brother usually just barged in himself), so it looked like my brother was a bit shocked. He steadied the plate of hot food he was holding with one hand, while he dutifully covered his face with the other like some nude model who had to keep his face hidden.

I clung to my brother’s arm with tears threatening to fall from my eyes.

“Oniichan, oniichan, what should I do?! Umm, there’s this thing on my chest-“

“Sasami-san’s chest?”

My brother moved one of his fingers so he could look through the crack at me.

“Actually, why does Sasami-san have her pajama top half-open...? Hahaah, I understand now! Finally, my love for you is getting repaid, yes?! I understand, I understand, just leave the rest to your oniichan! Come on, onto the bed-“

“Shut up you idiot! Listen to what I’m trying to say!”

I screamed at my brother as he began to try to forcibly drag me to the bed.

“What are you thinking, you damn pervert?! We’re siblings, aren’t we?!”

“Eh? I thought you just wanted to sleep next to me because you had a scary dream... was that not it?”

“A-Ahh, so that was it... I was thinking of something completely different...”

“What were you thinking? Sasami-san, you’re such a naughty girl! What kind of scene were you painting in that cute little head of yours? Come on, you don’t have to spare any details, just tell your oniichan! Just tell me, hurry up, hahhh hahhh hahh...”

“You’re doing that on purpose, aren’t you?! Also, why the hell are you stripping?! If I just wanted to sleep next to you why the hell would we need to get naked?!”

As I spat out the foulest obscenities at my brother, I managed to shake his hand off and distanced myself a bit from him.

And then, my face flushing completely red, I showed my brother my slightly exposed upper body.

“Here, look at this...”

That hand was still dangling out from my chest.

It didn’t seem like it was going to grow any bigger than this... and it wasn’t moving either... also, a tumor or something like that wouldn’t ever look this much like a hand.

“W-What is happening to me? Help me, oniichan...”

“Hmmm.....”

My brother approached me and seemed to be seriously in thought.

“This is certainly quite strange.”

He slowly grabbed onto one of my breasts and began to lightly squeeze it.

Squeeze squeeze squeeze.

“You’re already in high school, but these don’t look like they’re growing any bigger... this just won’t do. I’m not surprised you’re so worried.

I understand, your oniichan will help you get these breasts to grow! When you get your breasts groped by someone else, you let out more female hormones, you know...”

“Oniichan...”

After I had killed my brother with the brightest smile in the world, I left his corpse there to rot and returned to the wash basin. I was an idiot to have any faith in that damn moron.

But murdering my brother did make me feel better, and I definitely had managed to regain my composure. So I decided to test a few things out.

“I can feel this...”

I timidly touched this *sarcoma* (as I will call it from now on) that was growing from my chest.

I could feel my touch through it.

In other words, this meant it was connected via nerves to my brain.

Which meant that this was another part of my body.

I could probably also feel pain through it, so it would probably be a bad idea to just cut it off...

I put a finger to the wrist of this sarcoma, and I could feel the *thud thud thud* of a heartbeat.

It was also connected to my circulatory system.

Yeah, it really would have been a bad idea to chop it off. I might have died of blood loss.

Although, I couldn't just live with this thing forever.

I was a hikikomori, which meant I didn't meet many other people and so it's not like anybody would care about this... but this thing made it hard to sleep and it was just a weird feeling to have something like this growing from my chest.

I had to get rid of it somehow...

"But really, what's wrong? Sasami-san..."

My brother seemed to have revived himself and walked over, seeming puzzled.

As I watched him warily to prevent myself from getting groped again, I pointed to the sarcoma on my chest.

“Oniichan, can you see this? Do you know what it is?”

“Uhh...”

My brother cocked his head to the side.

“There’s a hand coming out of your chest. But that’s not anything strange.”

“.....”

I knew it now.

This was an alteration.

No matter how off my brother was, if a hand suddenly sprouted from his little sister’s chest he should be surprised and immediately go to find a doctor.

But my brother wasn’t shaken at all... *it was almost like this was completely normal to him.*

In other words, some god had enacted an alteration, and this irregularity was the result.

I protected my body with my spiritual powers, but the divinity of humans was not that high.

If a strong god targeted me, I wouldn't be able to defend against that.

But, who exactly was targeting me? And why me?

What was he after...? What was the point of making a hand come out of my chest...?

"Sasami-san."

My brother had no way of detecting this irregularity, but maybe he sensed my unease... he pulled me in for an embrace as if I was a small child and stroked my head.

"Everything will be alright. There's nothing to worry about. Sasami-san is a strong girl, so she'll be able to overcome anything."

"Okay..."

For some reason, I felt nervous, and I looked up at my brother.

I was greeted by a rare sight. My brother was not covering his face.

“We have plenty of money, and you can also buy food through the mail, right? Even if you didn’t have this room, even if you didn’t have me... you would be alright.”

“Yeah, I would be.”

I would come to forever regret my words back then.

It’s just that when my brother hugged me like that, I felt myself blush and had to act strong... so I looked at him with an angry expression and spoke curtly.

“I’m strong. I can do anything by myself. Oniichan doesn’t have to worry about a single thing.”

“Yes, that’s certainly true.”

My brother smiled.

“Ever since she was a child, Sasami-san could do her best by myself... I never had to save her, and all I could do is follow along and admire her...”

“Oniichan?”

I cowered a bit at the sound of loneliness in his voice and looked up at him.

I didn’t realize it.

The fingertips of the sarcoma that was dangling from my chest had begun to move.

@@@@@

The preservation of the world.

To manage and control this world that was made for the comfort of humans, I had to keep the power of the Supreme God sealed within me in check... and that was an unimaginably painful task.

Generation after generation, my family members tended to die young.

That wasn’t a surprise. The Supreme God was sealed within our kin.

Our bodies were honed to be the most suitable for keeping the Supreme God contained and in control. And to protect that bloodline, our family repeatedly practiced incest, causing our bodies to deteriorate.

My mom and dad had been siblings.

From ancient times, our family would tie together siblings or parent and child... they would give birth to a new child, thus tying our bloodline together.

The women would become priestesses and hone their spiritual powers in order to manage the Supreme God.

The men would support those priestesses and become their servants. They would protect the priestesses with their lives, and in the end would be used as mere tools for childbirth and then tossed away.

My brother had also been brought up like that.

Ever since our childhood, my brother was no more than my slave.

No matter what I said, he would listen. He would eat all the things I didn't want to eat. He would smash any bugs that came out and scared me. He would carry heavy things for me, switch with me when I had hard chores to do... I ended up using him for anything and everything.

But I didn't think there was anything wrong with that.

That was just the role thrust upon the men in our clan.

My brother never received a proper education, and his mentality was completely remodeled into that of a servant.

This was also why he always hid his face, supporting me with all his strength from the shadows like a ninja or a stage assistant.

I would rely on my brother to cut open a path forward for me, and then to take me on his shoulders to walk that path.

But my brother never doubted me for a second. He never complained that I was completely using him. He was like a robot... and if I ordered him to bite off his tongue and kill himself he would probably gladly comply.

My brother thought of me as his beloved family, believed that I was the ultimate female, and worshiped me like a god.

That was just how he was made.

Even as I knew how wrong all of this was, I continued to take advantage of him.

My brother was the only person in the world who wouldn't betray me.

My brother was the only person in the world who wouldn't hurt me.

My brother was the only person in the world who loved me.

No matter how ugly I was, no matter how worthless I was, no matter how seedy, how disgusting, how awful of a girl I was, my brother would accept me for me. He would support me. He would protect me.

It was hard to call this love... it was perhaps more like a programmed response.

So, when I used the computer I had coaxed my parents into buying for me, when I was getting completely lost in the world of the Internet... I thought that I would bring my brother with me when I left.

He was a useful tool, after all.

He would support the lifestyle I wanted to live.

That was it; I wasn't supposed to feel anything more than that.

I had gotten fed up with this Supreme God prison, this life that I was living which tortured me both physically and psychologically. So I ran away. I turned my back and ran away from the role that had persisted in our clan from time immemorial, and for which my own mother had sacrificed herself.

I might have been weak and foolish. I might have done something that prevented me from ever holding my head up again.

But I was at my limit.

Why was it that only I had to be isolated and trapped like a bird in a cage to preserve the Supreme God's power, while everyone else lived free lives outside?

To prevent the Supreme God's powers from being activated carelessly, my desires were all stripped away, and I was drugged so I lived perpetually in a haze. To prevent me from being the target of someone's evil scheme, I was locked away and only allowed to interact with my brother, who took care of me.

I was lonely. And I was scared. Scared that I was going to die like this.

I didn't want to be used up and worn out, and for everything to end like that.

I pretended to be an obedient priestess, deceiving everyone else at the shrine, and then one day... I secretly disposed of the medicine I was supposed to take in the bathroom.

And then, with clear will, I sorrowed over my misfortunes, and in the end decided to run away.

This time, it wasn't for some silly reason like escaping to a manga café to play.

This time, I didn't intend to return.

I didn't care what happened to the world.

No matter what the world spat at me, no matter how many stones they threw at me, I didn't care.

I was already at my limit. I couldn't take it anymore.

Pain and fear had won out against any guilt I was feeling.

Of course, there were people who tried to stop me, but I shook them off.

If I used the power of the Supreme God, then nobody could interfere with my plans. I took my brother with me, and went far away... until I arrived in Amenonuboko and settled down here.

The first night after my escape, I was shaking with regret for having betrayed everyone, but my brother embraced me and slept right next to me. I still remember his words from back then.

“It’ll be alright, Sasami-san.”

My brother never really talked back at the shrine (the other people at the shrine actually thought of him as a worthless caretaker who always spaced out and wasn’t good at his job), but that night he continued to talk to me until I relaxed and fell asleep.

“Don’t be afraid. Don’t cry. You’re free now. Be proud of that, and live happily. That’s your right. The people back at the shrine were wrong. Nobody has the right to take your life from you.”

I was too weak to say anything, but I just wept and held onto my brother, feeling his body’s warmth.

“All your pain and regret and guilt... all the bad things you feel... give everything to me. I’ll take them for you. That’s my role in this world. That’s my reason for living.”

My brother was kind.

Everyone had always made fun of him, but I'd known forever that my brother had a truly beautiful, pure heart. At the very least, I preferred his attitude far more to the ones of those adults who just threw meaningless flatteries my way and whose ulterior motives were as transparent as glass.

When I cried, he would stroke my head.

He would comfort me with clumsy words.

I was certain that I loved my brother.

But that was why I also hated him. As long as we lived in the shrine, we would someday have to comply with our clan's wishes and make a child together. And then, we would pass down our heavy burdens onto our son or daughter. So, my feelings towards my brother would always be those for a convenient tool; I couldn't let those feelings develop into genuine affection.

And so, I loved my brother.

But we could never be joined together.

@@@@@

It took three days from the first appearance of this sarcoma before something strange happened.

I had returned to my usual mode of life.

The sarcoma was an important clue, but I was already tired of worrying about it, so I just let it be.

I was just casually going around all the favorite websites I had bookmarked.

One of the net idols I liked had once again written a blog post filled with emoticons. That relieved a bit of stress.

I tended to lose my sense of time when I surfed the net, but that was what being thirsty was for.

I suddenly felt like I wanted to drink something.

And that's when I noticed the coffee cup being held right up next to my lips.

“.....”

I was at a loss for words, but soon realized what was happening.

The sarcoma that had sprouted from my chest was holding a coffee cup up to my lips. As if telling me to drink.

It was moving.

And what's more, this sarcoma had grown.

The other day, only everything after the wrist was showing, but today I could see the entire arm almost up to the shoulder.

How had I not noticed this before...? Did it just suddenly grow out with tremendous speed?

I shook at this amazing turn of events and couldn't move, so of course I didn't have the composure to drink from the coffee cup either.

Maybe it sensed that I was frozen in place, but the sarcoma put the coffee cup down.

And then, of all things, it skillfully used its one hand to type on the keyboard.

It opened up Notepad, and words began to appear on the screen.

-
Good afternoon.

I couldn't do anything but open and close my mouth wordlessly.

Wanting to test something out, I tried to put strength into this sarcoma.

If this was really a part of my body, then I should be able to move it, right?

That's useless. I am a will separate from your own.

The sarcoma almost seemed to be mocking me when it said that.

I couldn't even call for my brother to help. Instead, I could only sit there and get knocked around by this irregularity.

"What... are you...?"

I am your "flesh."

I am a god that represents a human body... more specifically, the body of Tsukuyomi Sasami.

During the Yamata no Orochi SNS incident from a few days ago, your psyche – that is, the will that was forcibly controlling this body – was temporarily separated from your body.

That small crack allowed me to awaken.

“Don’t tell me...”

I had a horrible feeling about this.

“Those people back at the shrine planted something in my body...? They predicted that I would betray them and run away... and they planted a god in my body who would be much more obedient to their wishes than I would have been... or maybe it’s better to say they absorbed that god into my body?”

That’s half correct.

Certainly, my will was something created through the efforts of those back at the shrine.

At the shrine, your own will was broken up through use of drugs. But in the off chance that at some point, you might suffer a mental collapse and be attacked in your sleep, they created me as an “emergency power supply” to be able to deal with those situations.

But for someone with the power of the Supreme God resting in her, if you felt like it you could destroy me at any time. My divinity is not that high. The people at the shrine would never have imagined you would betray them in their wildest dreams... to the very end, I was made as a precaution to save you in emergency situations.

My one goal is the preservation of this physical body. I will do anything to accomplish that goal. That is how I was programmed.

“Protecting my body...”

Yes. If it is to ensure this body’s safety, even the desires of your psyche – the main controlling force of this body – are irrelevant to me.

In certain cases, I may even find myself at odds with you.

But trust me, there is no need to worry.

The only reason I took the risk to come out and reveal myself to you is because I have managed to finally ensure your complete safety.

Everything is now over. Your happy lifestyle has been perfectly assured.

You should be grateful.

“Y-You...”

I felt a chill run up my spine and suddenly stood up.

Now that I thought about it, I hadn’t eaten breakfast today. I hadn’t eaten lunch either. What happened to my brother? It was a weekday too. Maybe he had something he absolutely had to do at school and so he left me alone at the house...? No no, my brother would never prioritize that over me.

But then, why hadn’t I seen my brother anywhere today?

The sarcoma coming from my chest slowly typed, almost as if it was playing with the keyboard.

I’ve always been watching from inside of you since you escaped from the shrine.

And then, I came to a conclusion.

The biggest threat to your life right now is any potential agents sent from the shrine to take you back. As long as you continued to fear that the shrine would send out a search party and use any means to capture you, there would be no relief in your life.

If you are caught by the shrine, this time there would be no escape. They would drug you, brainwash you, and forever isolate you. Those people would definitely go that far.

However, there is one method by which you will never need to fear that shrine again.

To the very end, the people at that shrine are only after the power of the Supreme God, with which they would like to preserve this world made for the comfort of humans. They don't need *Tsukuyomi Sasami*, but just the god in this land with the highest divinity.

But right now, the power of the Supreme God is not resting within you...

"It's in... oniichan..."

Yes.

I knew that all too well.

It was something I was still in the middle of investigating... but for now I really didn't understand why things had turned out this way.

After I ran away from my family and began to live in this place... I soon realized it.

I had lost the power of the Supreme God. I only was able to control the very average power of my own body's god by using my spiritual powers.

I had lost the ability to control everything, down to the very laws of nature, that came with possessing the power of the Supreme God Amaterasu.

That power had shifted into my brother.

I had no idea why, but that was the only possible explanation.

I could no longer create alterations in the world. In return, all my brother's wishes had begun to come true. For example, he hadn't been educated himself but suddenly found himself employed as a teacher... the world was being altered in order to be more convenient for my brother.

My brother was raised as my servant, and to make sure he had no ambitions of his own he was given almost no spiritual powers (he was a so-called "spiritual eunuch"). So he had no way of understanding the position he was in, and just continued to warp the world around him.

My own divinity had plummeted to close to zero, so I had no real option other than to just watch my brother from a distance and make sure he didn't try to change the world in any strange ways.

That was the current state of affairs.

Indeed. The Supreme God Amaterasu had migrated from Tsukuyomi Sasami to Tsukuyomi Kamiomi.

The sarcoma began to make a proud declaration.

The Supreme God is sealed within flesh... and Sasami is related by blood to Kamiomi. So even an unprecedented event like a transfer of the Supreme God might be possible. The priestesses have always been women, but that's just an arbitrary rule set down by humans. Men can also be suitable vessels for the Supreme God.

What probably happened is that your brother told you he would take on all your pain... and so the biggest burden you had was taken by him.

Yes.

I probably did something like that and took advantage of my brother.

I gave up trying by myself.

And decided to throw everything onto my brother's shoulders.

After that, isn't the solution simple?

The sarcoma seemed incredibly pleased with itself.

The shrine wants the power of the Supreme God. And right now, that power rests within Tsukuyomi Kamiomi.

So if Tsukuyomi Kamiomi returns to the shrine, then there will be no danger of them chasing after you.

The shrine will have the Supreme God's power returned to it, and the people there will be satisfied with that.

So then, Tsukuyomi Kamiomi would just need to negotiate with the shrine and offer himself in return for the shrine leaving his little sister in peace. From his perspective, he will have been able to protect his precious little sister, so this is a satisfying result.

You will no longer need to fear anybody from the shrine, and nobody will interrupt your new life.

I will also be able to accomplish my goal of protecting this body.

Everybody wins. It is a wonderful conclusion, is it not?

"You....."

I could feel my guts boiling, and I grabbed the sarcoma with both my hands.

I felt an intense pain run through me, but I couldn't give up now just because of that.

This thing was the god of my physical body, and was set up to counter anybody who might attack me while I slept. In other words, when I slept... when I wasn't conscious, this thing could freely control my body.

My biological clock was completely off track, so there were many times when my brother was awake but I was asleep.

So this sarcoma might have used one of those times to make contact with my brother.

But my brother had no consciousness of this irregularity, so he wouldn't be able to realize that I was being controlled by a different will. He would think of the sarcoma as me, and then believe whatever it said.

"You... told all that to oniichan, didn't you?! While I was asleep, you hijacked my body... and then pretended to be me and told all that to oniichan, didn't you?!"

You seem to be greatly misunderstanding something.

I just showed *your report* to that completely ignorant brother of yours, and patiently answered all his questions.

He was the one who came to his own conclusions, who made his own decisions, and who chose to go back to the shrine in order to protect you.

He's probably already finished negotiating with the people at the shrine, and now is trying to return the world to its normal made-for-humans state.

If the Supreme God desires something, all the myriad gods have no choice but to obey. My own divinity is not high at all, so I may soon no longer be able to talk.

So in the end, I just wanted to come out and explain the situation to you.

Congratulations, Sasami-san.

Your days of peace will now be able to continue into eternity.

Chapter 16: Expedition to Ame-no-Iwato (Back Half)

Where exactly was I trying to go?

-

I flew out of my room with explosive force.

I could feel rage boiling in me with a force I had never felt before.

I burst out of my room still in my casual clothes, and rushed through the hallway.

I went down the stairs and headed for the entranceway. I was surprised. I was a hikikomori... but I could move around fine.

Ever since I was born, I was put through rigorous trainings at the shrine in order to heighten my spiritual abilities.

As a result, I could perceive when gods were present, and was able to detect alterations (you could call it Spiritual Observation). But when the power of the Supreme God went to my brother, who had no spiritual powers, I couldn't do anything but watch as he altered the world at a whim and turned reality into chaos.

My powers allowed me to separate what parts of the world were constant and what parts had been altered, and I just felt increasingly repulsed, not being able to adapt to a world which changed at the drop of a pin.

In addition, because the ruler of all the gods was now residing in my powerless brother, the gods felt more at ease to do what they wanted, which caused a frightening situation.

Apart from my own room, which I protected with spiritual barriers, every step I took sent a chill down my spine and nauseated me, to the point where I couldn't even stand up. I cowered before the gods, feared the creation of alterations, and had no choice but to shut myself in.

I also wanted to be able to move around freely outside. I wanted to stroll around under the sun. I wanted to go to actual stores to buy things, to dress myself up fashionably and eat boldly at restaurants.

But that was impossible for me.

Just going to the bathroom on the first floor of our house made me dizzy and sometimes nauseous.

If I tried to go outside, I would probably faint from these horrible feelings.

For someone as spiritually sensitive as I was, the chaotic state of the world right now was just too much to bear.

I couldn't even go to school, even though I had dreamed about doing so before.

I wasn't a hikikomori by choice. I wasn't missing school because I wanted to. I just couldn't deal with the world. But the world was this messed up exactly because I had thrust the responsibility of holding the power of the Supreme God onto my brother, so I didn't have the right to complain to anyone.

"Ugh..."

But... just for today...

Please... just for today... let me go outside.

The sarcoma coming out of my chest seemed agitated and wiggled around, but I had used some of the charms I had stolen from the shrine and pasted them to the sarcoma so it could no longer act up.

This house was too empty, and horribly cold.

On the living room desk, I found a farewell letter written by my brother.

I picked that letter up, and hugged it to myself without even opening it. I would read it while I was on the move. I could already imagine what he had written. He really had left. He really had gone back.

He had left me here by myself.

He had left me here, because he was trying to protect me.

“Oniichan, you idiot...!!”

I got to our entranceway, and put on my shoes. It was something I hadn’t done for a long time.

And then, I opened the door and flew outside. I could do this, I thought. My body felt better than it had ever before.

Maybe my brother had already reached the shrine, and was being advised by the people there on how to make the world a good place for humans again... so maybe things had returned to normal...

If the world was normal again, I wouldn’t feel nausea anymore, and would just be able to walk around outside normally... is what I thought.

But that was completely wrong.

Underneath the clear winter sun, I took a step out of our house.

I felt a shock to my head, almost as if I had gotten punched.

“...?!”

My legs fell limp, almost as if they had gotten torn off, and I keeled forwards.

The asphalt came crashing into my face, and blood flowed from a scratch on my forehead.

I felt pain all over. It was like pins and needles were being stuck into me. It was almost hard to believe how much pain was attacking me from the outside, from the inside, from every angle and direction.

Nothing had changed in this world.

I was able to run this far only because in all my rage my sense of feeling had gone numb, and I was able to force myself here without actually feeling anything.

I gasped, almost suffocating, and my eyes began to tear up. I somehow pulled my face from the ground.

I tried to at least crawl my way forwards, but it felt like something was pressing into me from above, and I was completely beaten. My face once again smashed into the floor.

I writhed in agony and screamed.

“Dammit...!!!”

I was too weak.

I was too foolish.

I couldn't do anything.

If this was going to happen, maybe it would have been better if I hadn't wished for anything in the first place.

To hope, to fail, to be frustrated... if that was all that was going to happen, what was the point?

Maybe I should have just remained a bird in a cage forever, and just stayed at that shrine until I outlived my use and died.

Wanting freedom... wanting a normal life... I was aiming way too high.

I got my brother caught up in all of this.

I betrayed all the people back home.

I had escaped out of my own selfishness.

And in the end, I hadn't achieved anything at all.

-

"Heyo."

-

As I lay prone, sobbing into the floor, I heard a voice from above me that was so carefree that I could swear it was mocking me.

When I looked up, I saw... as if it was the most natural thing in the world...

I saw someone there squatting down with a happy look on her face, almost as if she had dropped something cool by the roadside and was trying to pick it back up.

It was the eldest Yagami sister, Yagami Tsurugi.

“You alright...? Whoa, that looks painful. You fell right on your face didn’t you...? Geez, you’re a girl, you know? It’ll be trouble if you get a scar on your face... here, lemme see.”

She held out her hand to me. Even in all my agony, I managed to look at her straight on.

“Take a few deep breaths.”

I sat up on the ground, and Tsurugi began to stroke my back.

“Don’t worry. The world isn’t as scary a place as you think.”

I slowly breathed in, and out, and in, and out... and was shocked. Things suddenly became easier.

I greedily sucked in more air, and then tears began to fall in drops from my eyes.

Tsurugi smiled at me.

“Don’t cry. You did well.”

“I didn’t do anything...”

I stood up. I wiped the tears off my face and started walking again.

“I thought I could just keep on living without doing anything. I thought if I escaped from the shrine, I could be free and find happiness. For me... for oniichan... we would be able to go on without being hurt or used by anybody. But there was school, and managing everyday life... everything was just so annoying...”

Both tears and blood mixed together on my cheek.

“I left everything to oniichan, and I didn’t try to do anything at all. I just lazed around, and didn’t do anything. I could live an easy life because I tossed all my baggage away and forced it all on oniichan. Even the heaviest, most painful baggage...”

When I left Tsurugi’s side, I felt it get hard to breathe again.

I got dizzy, got nauseous... almost as if I had entered into another planet.

I staggered, but I clasped onto a guardrail and dragged myself forwards.

“I won’t forgive this. To think oniichan would dare take everything from me, accept everything, and then go off with all of that somewhere far away... I won’t allow it. All I’ve done is push things on him, but I’ve never truly given him anything... I’ve known that all along.”

Who was I yelling to?

Where was I going?

I didn't really know myself.

"I'll go get oniichan back... back into the palm of my hand."

I wouldn't forgive him for just deciding by himself to take everything far away.

We had run away to escape from the fate that had been forced upon us.

We were caged birds who had flown away, away from a life where we were being led around every day by someone else.

But despite that, I hadn't made a single choice by myself, had taken full advantage of my brother, and had made him do everything for me. I had lived lazily like that up until now.

And so, now my brother had gone far away.

He was under the wrong impression that without him, I would be fine.

He had taken me seriously when I relentlessly called him useless, called him an idiot, called him a pervert... and had mistakenly believed that I would be okay even if he left.

I had to at least make sure he realized how wrong he was.

I loved my brother.

But we could never be joined together.

So I kept my true feelings a secret, and just tried to hide my embarrassment...

I never wished for him to leave.

“You know, there’s a difference between ‘trying’ and ‘pushing yourself too hard’... Sasami.”

Tsurugi caught up to me and took me by the hand.

“You’re still a kid, so it’s fine if you get a bit of help to go to places you can’t reach by yourself. That’s way better than never making it in the first place. You’re not taking advantage of anyone. Adults like us are happy when kids ask us to help them like that.”

Tsurugi had used some kind of alteration to erect a barrier around us or something... because when I held her hand, it became strangely easier to breathe and move around.

Tsurugi happily led me forwards, and laughed as she always did.

“If you’re worried about family things, then ask me for advice. You might forget it sometimes, but I’m your homeroom teacher, ya know? Fufufufu.”

In the next instant, the scenery around me changed completely.

@@@@@

The scent of dry leaves.

In the time it took me to blink, everything around me had changed completely.

The completely normal houses around me suddenly turned into a desolate wintry mountain.

It was a place I was familiar with.

This was a remote corner of Kyushu... my clan’s territory, wasn’t it?

In front of my eyes was what almost looked like a samurai's mansion... it definitely didn't seem like a shrine at all. There was a moat, a high fence, and even a watchtower, making it clear that this place was prepared in case someone attacked it.

This was where the Supreme God was contained in order to maintain a world fit for humans... so it was natural that it seemed like a durable place.

"Ohh, it's really been a while since I've come here."

Tsurugi continued holding me by the hand as she smiled and seemed to be enjoying herself.

Her words startled me.

"You've been here before...? To this shrine..."

"Well, let's walk and talk. We gotta get there before it's all over."

Tsurugi was muttering a few strange things as she led me forwards by the hand.

There were a lot of big rocks and tree stumps in our way, which made it hard to walk.

I didn't have many fond memories of the shrine, so the closer we got the more uneasy I felt.

But then, even though I was a bit late on the uptake, I finally realized something.

The shrine had been destroyed.

The gate had been smashed up, and the religious statues on that gate's left and right had been destroyed from halfway up.

Those statues were equipped with modern weaponry and spiritual defenses which could repel any invaders... they were supposed to be quite frightening things...

When we took a step into the shrine grounds, an even stranger sight was there to greet us.

People who obviously belonged to the shrine based on their outfits were shaking in fear and running around, trying to escape.

Things exploded left and right... it was really like we were looking right at a battlefield.

I saw familiar faces from my family, people who I feared in the past, who were now panicking and praying to god while fleeing on all sides.

Something... was attacking the shrine?

Considering this shrine boasted extremely high defensive capabilities, to think it could be destroyed so easily... did an entire army come or something? No, this shrine was protected behind closed doors by the Japanese government, so there was almost no chance it was being attacked by the Self Defense Force or some foreign army.

So, what the hell was happening...?

Or should I be asking, was this shrine seriously so weak that it could be getting smashed to bits this easily...?

I could feel the tension drain from my shoulders as Tsurugi began to whisper to me.

“You know, I could have destroyed this place at any time if I felt like it...”

It was hard to believe how much pressure was coming from that small body of hers, and I unconsciously held my breath.

“But ya know, they were taking care of the world and all those really annoying gods in my place. Sure, the humans are a bit harsh towards the other gods, but other than that they’re pretty good at managing the world. And I’d rather not have too many annoying things on my plate, so I just left everything to them...”

“You...”

At her words, I began to suspect something unbelievable...

“Don’t tell me...”

“A long time ago.”

There was an explosion close by, but Tsurugi just continued walking forwards lightly and began to talk.

“Before the history of man, in a time only described by myth, I was given the right to absolute control by the gods of creation Izanagi and Izanami, and was entrusted with the preservation of this land.”

This terrifying creature before me shrugged her shoulders and continued talking as if she was just speaking idle gossip.

“But the gods just acted how they wished, and they didn’t listen to anything I said. So I started sulking and locked myself in a cave behind a boulder, but I was forcibly lured out of there. So I just got fed up and transferred the Supreme God’s power to Ninigi no Mikoto.”

Ninigi no Mikoto...

He was the man that reshaped the world, a person of myth who stood midway between god and man.

“I just told all the other gods ‘I don’t care anymore, so just leave the rest to this guy.’ You could say I retired. And then I hid. When gods hide from the world, it’s somewhat similar to dying. But well, I only meant to rest for a little bit...”

The fleeing denizens of the shrine didn’t seem to notice us. It was as if we had suddenly become invisible.

Or that we had become gods.

How difficult must it have been to take care of the world for thousands of years?

I could understand why Tsurugi had just gotten tired and fed up with it all.

She wasn't some automatic program. She had a heart and could get tired or get angry... she had a "will."

"I thought I would slowly get back into doing things myself when Ninigi no Mikoto died, but that guy found a pretty unexpected way to transfer the power of the Supreme God down to the next line."

"Incest..."

"Exactly. Ties of blood. Ninigi no Mikoto had received full power from me, but also gave birth to offspring who were almost genetically identical to himself. Through channels of flesh and blood, the Supreme God's power transferred to his offspring, and that has continued to the present day."

Tsurugi stared into the distance nostalgically.

"And it's not like I could just go up to him and say 'Hey, what the hell are you doing? Give that power back to me.' I was the one who forced it on him. And the world that the humans had created was pretty stable. Sure, they were a bit harsh on the gods, but the world was at peace. So I decided to just watch over them."

This being who was once our land's sun gave me a smile.

"It's like you. You're always keeping an eye on the person with the Supreme God's power to make sure he doesn't do something stupid."

But you still push all the annoying things onto other people... and you don't do anything yourself. But what's unexpected is that everything still turned out pretty okay."

"If you wanted the power of the Supreme God back, could you do it?"

I asked her the question that had been on my mind.

What if humans suddenly were stricken with greed and began to use the power to turn the world into a terrible state? If she couldn't defend against that things would go to hell. This irresponsible god had to at least have thought of that, right?

"Yeah, I can. I just lent this power to the humans. You could say they're my representatives. I just have to tell them 'Good work. It's fine now,' and the power will come back to me. But I'm seriously just tired of everything..."

Both body and soul, Tsurugi seemed to be implying. She rubbed her own shoulders, showing her age a bit.

"Even if I took the power of the Supreme God back from the humans, I would be too exhausted to keep it for myself. Instead, I'd bestow it upon a new will and deify that will as the new Supreme God. So it would be like having an official successor. And you know that person pretty well..."

Tsurugi pointed in a direction where big explosions were taking place.

It seemed that the shrine's pawns – low-level gods (most people would call them monsters) that they had under their control – were fiercely struggling.

Kappa, oni, a giant with a single eye¹... all those irregularities were sent flying, and then completely disappeared. Almost as if they *had been eaten*.

“Thanks for the meaaaal~~~.”

There was one person mowing down all these monsters, and who still had the time to be polite...

It was the third Yagami Sister, the enticing elementary schooler... Yagami Tama.

“... Her?”

I pointed at Tama, and Tsurugi nodded.

“Yeah. That's a new god I gave birth to from my own being and raised as the next generation's Supreme God. She was once a part of me, so I've been calling her my little sister... but if you want to be precise, she's more like a daughter. I haven't told her that yet though.”

¹ These are all famous Japanese monsters (youkai).

I see.

If you read the myths you would know, but Japanese gods could use a piece of their own bodies to give birth to offspring. Hell, in the worst case, they could accidentally sneeze and then make children.

Geez, what a careless lot they were.

“Being a mom is pretty out of character for me, so all I told her is that the Supreme God Amaterasu gave birth to her. That’s why she calls Tsukuyomi Paparin. He has the Supreme God’s power inside of him right now, so she probably thinks of him as a parent.”

I didn’t really know how the concepts of “children” and “parent” worked when it came to the gods.

But to Tama, the power of the Supreme God itself was a parent (which is probably why she had said “like Mamarin!” back when she was imitating a frog – she was comparing the Amaterasu who was lying dormant within my brother to the hibernating frogs), in which case she probably thought of my brother as a parent too, since that power rested inside of him.

“Right now, Tama has been eating a lot of gods and absorbing them to heighten her own divinity. She’s really very young, and she’s going to elementary school to match her age... but I made her in the image of what I felt the next Supreme God should look like, so there’s a pretty big mismatch there.”

“Ah, that’s why she looks so off for an elementary schooler...”

It’s no wonder her physical appearance and mental age didn’t match at all.

Tama had just been born, and she really only had the life experiences of an elementary schooler.

But unlike humans, who after they were born gradually went from baby to adult, gods mostly kept the same physical form forever.

That’s why Tama’s physical appearance seemed so out of place... you could say that you could feel a huge gap somewhere.

Tsurugi’s expression suddenly turned serious.

“Ahh, right, I used most of my body to make her, so that’s why I look like this, got it? I had a much nicer body in the past, okay? I’m not lying.”

The fact that she was trying to emphasize that was pretty suspicious though...

Could it be that she’s always been this puny?

After all, Amaterasu’s nickname had been “the Eternal Virgin.”

In any case, Tama seemed to have noticed us, and waved. “Ah, Tsurugi-nee! Sasami-oneechan!” she called. As I watched her, I threw another question out.

“Okay, so that explains how you and Tama are related... so what about Kagami?”

“Kagami is like Tama. She’s a ‘little sister’ or ‘daughter’ that I made by using a piece of my own being.”

I also caught sight of Kagami.

She was firing missiles and machine guns and all sorts of things, destroying the shrine physically.

What amazing firepower that was...

Maybe I could sense a bit of hostility in those eyes of hers as she attacked the shrine, but she really seemed to be taking this seriously. For a girl like her who usually seemed completely unmotivated, it was a rare sight to see.

“But she’s a bit special... I actually never meant to give birth to Kagami. A long, long time ago, I was attacked by a foreign enemy... and one part of my being was cursed.”

Foreign enemies.

In other words, gods from other nations.

“It was pretty gross to just let it stay there cursed like that, so I cut that piece off and threw it away.”

She made that sound like it was a completely natural thing to do...

“But then, some humans found that part of me and raised it themselves. And then, those evil-willed heretics took what was still just a slab of meat and built it as a robot built with spiritual energy. Almost her entire body is made of artificially created spiritual tools, or modern weapons.”

“So they took a god and made it into a robot...”

“Yeah. Humans have some nerve to go thinking of something like that.”

On the contrary, Tsurugi seemed almost impressed. She smiled and waved at Kagami.

“But I mean, she was once a part of me, so it was painful to see her getting used for crimes and causing trouble to society. So I confiscated her away from that evil organization. At that point, Kagami already seemed to have become self-aware, so I thought it would be a bit sketchy to just do away with her... and I decided to just raise her like that.”

"Like my own little sister," Tsurugi seemed to mutter with great emotion under her breath.

"She was once just a cursed part of me, so her divinity itself is pretty low, but because she was tampered with so much by the humans, she's equipped with a lot of spiritual tools and weapons. When it comes to human and physical phenomena, she's a hell of a force to be reckoned with. She could take on an entire army by herself. I don't even know the full range of her abilities yet..."

"Alright, so that explains who you three sisters are..."

As I watched Kagami follow up with another round of shelling to destroy a watchtower, I asked another question.

"What exactly are you three doing here? It honestly looks like you lot just went off the deep end."

"Fufufufu." Tsurugi chuckled at me.

"We're blowing this shrine up for you."

"W-Why are you doing something like that-"

“Why exactly do you think we suddenly showed up around you and your brother?”

Tsurugi still remained holding onto my hand and stared right up into my eyes.

“We gods are existences who are unable to manifest ourselves unless people are aware of us. We’re like dreams, or phantoms. Usually, we melt into the background, and our presences go unnoticed. And yet... we decided to come into your life and live out the same days as you. Why do you think that is?”

“W-Why, you ask...”

Wasn’t it just because they felt like it?

Almost as if she was overlooking my confusion, Tsurugi proceeded to make her statement.

“Think back to that time with Yamata no Orochi. That was a god you had created without even knowing it, because of an unconscious prayer you had. You wished for it, and he appeared like that. It’s the same for me, for Kagami, for Tama... at the core, we’re just conceptual existences without any physical form. We’re gods, after all.”

She smiled happily.

“But you wished for it. Wished for us Yagami Sisters. You wished for someone to be there to protect these peaceful days you were living... as allies, as neighbors, as friends. That’s what I believe. And so, we’ll work to protect that carefree life of yours.”

And so, the former Supreme God turned to a worthless miko and gave her a smile overflowing with childlike naiveté. She then made a declaration.

“For now, to get rid of any fears you might have about the future, let’s destroy this shrine... and then let’s get that idiot Tsukuyomi back, and return to that chaotic but fun life of ours. Let’s eat sweets, play games, have ridiculous conversations... that’s the world you desire, and we’ll do our best to make that world come to life.”

At her words, I nodded.

I really couldn’t judge exactly how many of Tsurugi’s words were true.

But that was indeed what I wanted.

Let’s go back.

Go back with oniichan.

Go back to those absurd, peaceful days I had come to love.

“Funyaa.”

Perhaps she was tired from raising such chaos, but Kagami let out a sleepy-sounding yawn and walked towards us.

“Neesan, this is quite troubling. We looked all around, but we cannot find Tsukuyomi-sensei anywhere. He definitely was headed for this place... but this place is both spiritually and physically locked down, and it’s difficult to search for human presences...”

“Tama can’t find Paparin either!”

Tama also came over with a troubled expression on her face.

“Tama was sure that Paparin was here... Tama can smell him. But, he’s not anywhere! Hmph!”

“.....?”

I cocked my head to the side. I had no idea what she was talking about.

My brother definitely was headed for this place, and I'm pretty sure he ended up getting here.

But they said they couldn't find him anywhere.

It's not like he could have just disappeared like smoke, so where was that idiot and what was he doing...?

I caught sight of a familiar girl wearing a cute red hakama² running around flustered and trying to escape. I quickly ran up to her... and asked her for information in a menacing tone.

"Hey, I need a few answers."

"Eh? Q-Q-Quick, run away! I have no idea what's happening! This fire, or earthquake, or monster invasion, or... h-huh? Whaa-?! Sasami-sama! You came back?!"

"Stop kneeling... can you just answer one question?"

I winced a bit at the sight of these people worshipping me way too much. But I still asked my question.

² A piece of traditional Japanese clothing which resembles a long skirt. Usually only worn by men.

“Umm, where’s oniichan? I think he came back to the shrine, but...”

“Hueh? You’re talking about Kamiomi-san?”

The girl put a finger up to her lips, and thought for a bit, when...

Suddenly, it seemed like she remembered something.

“Ahh, now that you mention it, he did come back recently... but he was saying some ridiculous things about having the Supreme God’s power and wanting to be made into a shrine priestess in your place...”

She let out a graceful snicker.

“But that guy has almost no spiritual ability, so it’s ridiculous for him to have the Supreme God inside of him, isn’t it? And when they checked, *as expected his divinity level was almost zero*. So the family head... your father... he told him ‘Stop being absurd and get out! As punishment for kidnapping Sasami, you’ve been disowned by this clan!’ And then chased him out of here, I think?”

“..... Eh?”

How was that possible?

Chapter 17: A Sakura Blossoms Out of Season¹

“Sasamisaaan~~.”

My brother was calling me.

As I dressed myself in the Konohana Sakuya Academy uniform, I used the black screen on my custom-built desktop no. 13 as a mirror, checking that my hair looked alright.

The sarcoma, now suppressed with a spiritual charm, squirmed around restlessly in my chest, but I pinched it and shut it up.

Pinching it hurt me too, but whatever.

The sarcoma quieted down and shrunk, until it became almost invisible under the sticker-like spiritual charm.

Fully satisfied, I picked up my school bag with my shiny new textbooks and college-ruled notebooks inside, and opened the door to my room.

“Good morning, oniichan.”

¹ There is a potential double meaning here – “a sakura blossoms” can be used idiomatically to mean that someone did well academically on an exam.

“Good morning, Sasami-san.”

My brother was standing outside.

His tall, familiar form was clad in a crisp suit.

My brother had returned to the shrine but was kicked out by my father, and had returned to the house in low spirits.

He was a pathetic sight to behold, but he had no sense of shame, so although things were a bit awkward for a little while he had already returned to normal.

Also, to him, it also seemed to be uplifting that I had decided to go to school again. With sketchy, spring-like steps, he walked down the hallway.

We turned on the TV, and sat across from each other eating breakfast and engaging in pointless chitchat.

I tried to secretly pour the milk I didn’t like down the sink, but my brother saw me. “This is why your breasts are so small,” he dared to say to me. Ugh, someday I’ll definitely kill him.

I checked myself in the mirror again, brushed my teeth, and then went out of our house with my brother.

My brother straddled his bike, and I sat behind him on the bike's luggage carrier.

"Sasami-san, it's dangerous to ride together like this."

"I haven't walked around for a while, so my muscles are pretty weak. So just think of it as a part of nursing me back to health, oniichan. Come on, hurry up and go."

We set off, flying through this town of Amenonuboko.

I was afraid of falling off, so I resigned myself to wrapping my arms around my brother. I stared at the scenery as it streamed past us.

I no longer felt nauseous. I was no longer afraid. And the reason for that was simple.

There was something I had been really misunderstanding before.

I had mistakenly believed that I had pushed the power of the Supreme God onto my brother. And in truth, all the evidence pointed in that direction... so I don't think anybody could really blame me for making that mistake.

But in the end, the power of the Supreme God still rested within me.

The person who was creating alterations in this world was me, and not my brother.

If I thought about it a bit, this was an obvious conclusion. If the power of the Supreme God really belonged to my brother, this world would have become a world that was most suitable for him.

If that were the case, the first victim of his alterations... would have been me.

My brother really loved me, so he would have unconsciously desired me, and then created an alteration to make me his.

Or maybe the laws would have suddenly changed so that brother-sister relationships were legal, or maybe all the girls in the world would suddenly have to wear maid uniforms... alterations that would make my brother happy would have happened.

My brother thought of me as something truly precious, so he wouldn't have wanted to forcibly bond me to him. But the other gods would have gone off by themselves and tried to appease my brother.

Like what had happened in the Valentine's Day Tragedy, all the gods would have gathered together and tried to alter me into the ideal woman for my brother in order to suck up to him.

But such a thing never happened.

After all, the power of the Supreme God still belonged to me, so I was able to fend off the attempts of those gods to meddle in my life. That sarcoma also couldn't really make a move until it found a crack in my defenses when my psyche was separated from my body.

As long as I held onto my own sense of self and could use my spiritual energy to control my powers, the irregularities couldn't touch me. Even if they tried something, they couldn't use alterations to affect the Supreme God, so everything they did would get blocked, defended against, and I myself would not be harmed.

And because I was keeping my power in check (especially in my room where I had erected a spiritual barrier), I didn't give rise to any alterations that benefited me.

I had trained day after day after day to make sure those alterations didn't happen.

But, I had unconsciously wished for something.

I had wished for my brother to have a happy life.

I mean, I had dragged him out from home, got him mixed up in all of this, and even made him betray our family... at the very least, I didn't want him to regret the decision he had made.

I also felt a sense of guilt.

So in order to make sure my brother could live happily, in order for that wish to be granted, I issued an order without even knowing it.

In response, the gods *tried to make my brother's wishes come true*.

They tried to fulfill his every desire.

Sensing this, I mistook it for the power of the Supreme God having moved to my brother.

And without knowing the truth, my brother took my report as fact (that sarcoma is also a part of me, so it probably was also under the same mistaken impression as I was) and went back to our clan... but in reality, my brother really had no power within him.

Without being able to accomplish anything, he then returned, listened to me explain the situation, and finally understood what was going on.

After that, things were simple.

Because I had believed that the power of the Supreme God had moved to my brother, I couldn't use the full extent of my powers, but now I could control them well.

The pain and nausea I would feel whenever I tried to leave my room was the result of evil gods and entities like that trying to take advantage of me while I thought I had lost my powers.

Once I recovered and was able to control my powers, I easily kicked those evil gods away from me.

Now, I could walk outside with no problem.

I could live in a world bathed in glittering sunlight.

"Ah, Paparin Mamarin! Good morning!"

Tama gave us an energetic greeting as she walked along with her friends and her elementary schooler backpack.

Ever since we explained the truth to her, she had been calling me Mamarin... I'd really prefer it if she stopped that. It almost made it sound like I was married to my brother...

“Ehehe... riding together like that, that looks pretty nice. Let Tama ride with you next time too~~.”

She waved at us vigorously.

I waved back as we rode away from this innocent elementary schooler with a nice body.

“Funyaa...”

Kagami was walking along the same path we were on and seemed half asleep.

It seemed like she had gone a bit overboard in that chaos the other day, and after that she had fallen into a dead tired state, to the point where it was hard to tell if she was awake or asleep. She walked forwards unsteadily, almost as if she was sleepwalking.

“Good morning, Kagami-san.”

Hearing my brother’s greeting, Kagami raised her head up slightly.

“Please don’t call out to me so casually. If people saw I was friendly with a teacher they might get the wrong idea.”

What an uncute thing to say. Well, it was certainly a Kagami-like thing to say.

When we caught up to her, Konohana Sakuya Academy came into view.

Almost as if trying to please me, the barren, wire-like trees lining the road suddenly burst into sakura in full bloom, scattering pretty flower petals everywhere. Ugh, what a meaningless alteration... Looking up, I saw fireworks shoot up into the sky, and the other people on the road started applauding and pointlessly shouting “Congratulations! Congratulations!”

I wondered if I should scold all these gods who were doing stupid things and get them to stop... but whatever. I don’t care. If I worried about every little thing I’d just get tired.

This was a world in which countless gods made merry.

It was a chaotic world, filled with only strange, incomprehensible things.

But it was also a world filled with freedom and happiness.

“Oh, so you finally came to school.”

Tsurugi was standing in front of the school gate greeting the students, and gave me a full smile.

“Welcome to Konohana Sakuya Academy.”

She gave me a few kind words of welcome for my first day at school.

“And also... welcome home.”

Yes. I had returned home.

I had returned to the peaceful days that I had always wished and yearned for.

I returned the greeting as I walked past Tsurugi, and went to the bike racks alone with my brother.

“Oniichan.”

“What is it, Sasami-san?”

There were a lot of things I wanted to say.

Words of thanks, of apology... things I wanted to declare, things I wanted to confess... there was just so much.

“Nah, it’s nothing.”

But well... I could also say those things tomorrow.

“Well then, let’s try our best today too.”

Afterword

Good afternoon. This is Akira.

I present to you this (not really) everyday life romantic comedy (?), Sasami-san@Ganbaranai.

I was aiming for a similar reading experience to reading a 4-koma, so I used a fixed cast of characters along with really short chapters in quick succession. It's best if you read this work in a nice, relaxed manner.

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@ In regards to novels with irregular patterns and no clear point of view// If you take a look at the light novels that have been coming out lately, Gagaga Books has been paving the way for novels with more experimental structures, so I took a point of view I've always wanted to try out and turned it into quite an irregular novel.

You could say this novel is a first-person novel from Tsukuyomi Sasami's point of view, but you could also say it's a third-person novel from Tsukuyomi Kamiomi's point of view. To put it another way, Tsukuyomi Sasami is the narrator, while Tsukuyomi Kamiomi is the protagonist.

The events in the story all happen to and revolve around Tsukuyomi Kamiomi, while Tsukuyomi Sasami can do nothing but observe things from the outside. You could say that Tsukuyomi Kamiomi creates the story, while Tsukuyomi Sasami is reading it.

All she can do is butt in with comments when something ridiculous happens, write down her impressions, and sum things up in reports, but she cannot fundamentally interact with the story itself.

In order to finally change things around, Tsukuyomi Sasami has to stop shutting herself in her peaceful little room and feel that she *<i>must try hard</i>*... I was playing around with that idea when I chose “Sasami-san@Ganbaranai” as the novel title.

From the beginning, I’ve always wanted to make a novel out of this idea from N*co Nico Douga¹ where the creators and consumers both make the story together, so this is my attempt at that.

First person versus third person, narrator versus protagonist, audience versus actor, reader versus creator... once those concepts break through and overcome the dimensional barrier, how will the story transform, and what will it all result in? What happened in this work is nothing more than one possible answer, and I hope that as the sequels are published, you will discover yet other experimental views of what could happen.

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@Next, some thanks// To Hoshino-san, my manager who gave me the inspiration to write about a link between the online world and the world of myth. To Hidari-san, who took time out of his truly hectic schedule to draw a unique yet enticing world for me. And to everyone who was involved with the creation of this story. Thanks to you all for all your efforts.

¹ It’s like the Japanese version of youtube, except a lot more emphasis on anime and anime-related things.

Let's try our very best for next time as well.

- Akira

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